

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

BY THE LATE

MRS. BOWDLER.

PRICE 5s.



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REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1775.

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PREFACE.

WHEN many learned and pious Commentators are employed in explaining the sacred book which is the subject of the following Essay, some apology may be necessary for offering this little work to the public.

The whole of the present publication was written in the year 1775; and a considerable part of it was printed in 1787, but without the name of the author. That edition being now out of print, it is believed that a more perfect impression will be acceptable to

many

many friends of the writer, who expressed their approbation of the smaller work ; and it is hoped, that the practical instruction which it contains may be read with pleasure and advantage by many persons, who have not leisure or inclination to examine the prophetical meaning of the Apocalypse.

To the practical use which might be made of that admirable book, the attention of this author was indeed chiefly directed ; but some of her observations on the prophetical parts may, perhaps, appear extraordinary to those who reflect that they were written many years before any thing, except the prophecy itself, could raise an expectation of those awful events, which now awaken the attention of every thinking mind,

and

and naturally lead the Christian to search the scriptures, and to observe the signs of the times.

The learned labours of Mr. King, Mr. Whitaker, Mr. Kett, and others, have thrown much light on this wonderful prophecy; and perhaps there are few persons, amongst those that really believe it to have been written under the guidance of Divine inspiration, who *now* feel any doubt as to the general meaning of the book, and its relation to the triumph of infidelity in the latter times, however they may differ as to the sense of some particular passages. But nothing, at the early period when this work was composed, seemed to point out the last and most formidable branch of the antichristian power.

power. There was then no reason to expect that a great and enlightened nation would in a few years renounce the religion of Christ, and exchange the glorious prospect of life and immortality brought to light by the gospel, for more than Pagan darkness, and the gloomy expectation of eternal sleep.

In whatever light these wonderful events may be viewed by the philosopher and the politician, they naturally turn the thoughts of the pious Christian to that unseen Hand which guides and directs the unruly wills of men; and let those who think they see the time of severe trial approaching, “when iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold,” remember that the same warning voice proclaims

to

to every faithful servant of Christ,
“ When ye see these things begin to
“ come to pass, *then* look up and lift
“ up your heads, for your redemption
“ draweth nigh.”

The Author of this little work made the sacred scriptures her constant study. Of the effect of that study on her conduct in life, and the comfort it afforded her in death, the Editor could speak with much satisfaction; but she would not fulfil the intention with which these papers were intrusted to her care, if, in presenting them to the world, she were to lose sight of that truly Christian humility, which induced the Author to express in the following words her motives for writing these and many other observations on the holy scriptures.

“ As

“ As what I have written must re-
“ main after me, or not answer the
“ purpose for which it is designed, I
“ think it due to the modesty of my
“ sex, and the humility of a Christian,
“ to declare the motives which made
“ me first enter on so bold an under-
“ taking. I little thought to have set
“ up for a teacher; but God, who has
“ been pleased to bless me with a nu-
“ merous family, has thereby made it
“ my duty to instruct them; and that
“ more especially in the holy scrip-
“ tures. Were men born, as some have
“ imagined, with capacities sufficient
“ of themselves to know and under-
“ stand the truth, instruction were not
“ only needless but rash, as tending to
“ prejudice young minds; but my own
“ expe-

“ experience, as well as that of others,
“ has convinced me this is not the
“ case. The mind of man is a blank,
“ and if care be not taken to fill it with
“ useful knowledge, it will fill itself
“ with trifles. Prejudice of education
“ is absolutely unavoidable. He who
“ is taught, is commonly prejudiced in
“ favour of what he has learnt; he who
“ is untaught, is as really prejudiced
“ against even the most evident truths,
“ merely because he is unacquainted
“ with them. Reason unassisted will
“ never teach man his duty; and the
“ instruction of the parent was doubt-
“ less the design of Providence. The
“ use of reason is to apprehend what is
“ taught, and to rectify, when strong
“ enough, the mistakes of education,

“ That

“ That my children may be enabled to
“ do so, is the chief reason why I have
“ ventured to put my thoughts in wri-
“ ting. Had I only instructed them
“ by word of mouth, my opinions would
“ have grown familiar, perhaps have
“ been adopted as their own; and, if
“ erroneous, would thereby be more
“ tenaciously retained; whereas, by
“ leaving those opinions in writing, I
“ give them opportunity, not only to
“ examine them by themselves, but to
“ call in the advice of more able persons.
“ That I may have made many mis-
“ takes, is probable; but I hope my
“ endeavours will be mercifully ac-
“ cepted by Him whom alone I ought
“ to seek to please; to whom be glory
“ now and for ever. Amen.”

REVELATIONS, i. 3.

BLESSED IS HE THAT READETH, AND THEY THAT
HEAR THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY, AND
KEEP THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN
THEREIN: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.

IT is no wonder that they who neglect to read the Holy Scriptures, should, by degrees, be brought to slight, and even to disbelieve, those sacred records; but it is a matter of amazement, that they who profess to study the Bible, and acknowledge it to be the word of GOD, should think any part of it unfit to be read. It is true, that every part of those sacred books is not of equal use; the book of Leviticus, for example, though it was necessary in order to fix the typical ceremonies of the Jewish religion, and to

B

warn

warn men against sins which should have been for ever unknown, but which, by fatal experience, had been found to be too common, yet cannot certainly be thought as fit to be frequently read as the Proverbs of Solomon; nor is the book of the Revelations of as general use as the Gospel of St. Matthew. But does it follow, that they are unfit to be known and read at all; and shall any, even the most ignorant, be excluded from reading them? Ought they not rather to be instructed to read these, as well as the other parts of scripture, with advantage? For I will venture to say, there is not a chapter in the Bible from which a modest humble Christian may not gather useful knowledge; at the same time that sinners find poison in the finest passages, even of the Psalms.

The text placed at the beginning of this Essay contains a plain command, with promise of a blessing, to all without exception, to read or hear, consequently to study and endeavour to understand, “ the words of this prophecy.”

prophecy," and "to keep," that is, to perform, the things written; which plainly shews it to be a book useful for practice, and useful to all.

It is not a sufficient reason for neglecting any part of scripture, to say we do not fully understand it. The prophecy of Zechariah, for example, was not fully understood by the Jews, nor is it perfectly clear to us even now; but let us suppose a Jew, four hundred years before the coming of our Saviour, to have been reading in the synagogue, *“ Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; behold thy King cometh,—having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass;”—the carnal Jews, in his auditory, would perhaps be far from believing that such expressions could belong to a conquering Messiah; but the humble-minded, such as wished for a Redeemer to save them from their sins, must joyfully have made use of the practical instruction; and as for the circumstances of the prophecy,

* Zech. ix. 9.

they

they would, like Mary, have laid them up in their hearts, and taught them to their children. Such there were in Israel, who, having received the prophecies, had them continually before their eyes, and when the time came, acknowledged the blessed Jesus in his humble triumph, and saluted him as coming in the name of the Lord, as the Saviour of Mankind.

Since, therefore, a blessing is promised to those who read the prophecy of this book, and particularly to those who keep the things written, I think it my duty to shew the young and ignorant what advantages I myself have found in so doing; and, as far as I am able, by clearing up the literal sense, to make the practical part more apparent to them; for a fable, an allegory, a symbolical representation, even a metaphor, have each a literal sense, as well as a passage in history, though they have besides a spiritual meaning. To clear up the first is to shew the connection of its parts, and their relation to each other, and
to

to set the whole, though a fiction, in a clear distinct view. To seek the spiritual sense, is to give the moral of the fable, the hidden sense of the allegory, the meaning of the symbolical representation; and to shew the strength of the metaphor, and its propriety when carried on through several parts, perhaps, of a long discourse. In all these, if the literal sense be not distinct, it will seldom be found that the spiritual meaning will have much effect.

I know it is almost impossible, in such a work, not to give some attention to the fulfilling of the prophecies, and not to be prejudiced, as others have been, by the particular opinions we have been used to reverence. We cannot help looking back on the events recorded in history, and forward to future times, and applying circumstances to such things as more especially affect ourselves; but this should be done with the greatest humility and caution, and with a strong sense of the danger of being misled, or misleading others, especially as to practice.

Let

Let not, however, the rash interpretation of enthusiasts, whether Papists or Protestants, deter the meanest of us from reading and meditating on this glorious prophecy, so full of practical instruction, and beautiful expressions of praise and adoration; but let the errors of others be a warning to us, to do it in the spirit of meekness and humility, not with a vain conceit of seeming wiser than others, or to assume authority over them. Let us leave the learned, who by divine appointment have leisure and means of enquiry, to examine times past, and form conjectures as to times to come; but let us all apply ourselves, as we are commanded, to learn here, as in other parts of scripture, how to praise and worship our God, our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and to live as brethren.

It is however necessary, in order to a practical use of the book of Revelations, to gain a competent knowledge of the things contained in it, especially as to the order in which they are placed; for which purpose

I shall

I shall here set down a sort of analysis of the whole, in the light in which it appears to me. But first I must beg the reader to call to mind, what we commonly read and hear with little attention, I mean, the descriptions of the tabernacle and temple, of the Jewish worship, and of the presence of Jehovah the object of it, with the explanation of these things in the epistle to the Hebrews; for the whole book of the Apocalypse has a reference to these “patterns of heavenly things,” as they are there called.

When we read the descriptions of Noah’s ark, of the tabernacle, or of the temple, and of the ceremonies of the Jewish worship, they seem tedious and uninteresting to us; and the prophecies of Ezekiel, relating thereto, we seldom read at all; yet it is plain, from St. Paul and others, and especially from the epistle to the Hebrews, that great instruction lies hid under these veils. The people to whom Ezekiel prophesied, complained that he spake parables; but doubtless,

ess, they were not strangers to the things of which he spake, and might have understood the meaning of those parables, had they not been a rebellious house. The Jews, from that time at least, that is, after the Captivity, grew more and more carnal and ignorant; yet we find, by the manner in which Christ and his apostles spake of those things, that they were still understood; but the Jews afterwards, through their dispersions, seem to have lost all rational knowledge of the law, except some few writers; and the Gentile converts, from their opposition to the Jews, and from a careless neglect of the original language of the scriptures, soon lost that knowledge of symbolical instruction which the first Christians seem in part at least to have enjoyed. Perhaps a time may come, when the Jews being enlightened, we may learn from them the meaning of those things which we do not understand, and find proofs of the divine knowledge and foresight where we least expect it.

The

The first words of the short preface with which the book of Revelations begins, proclaim it to be a revelation from God, and of, or from, Jesus Christ. *He*, that is, Jesus, sent his angel unto John, who bare record of, or concerning, the word of God—the Logos, and of the testimony of Jesus, that is, the gospel of, or faith in him. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand;” viz. the time in which they are to be successively fulfilled; for they evidently take up a long space, which was already begun. The blessing is from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits (or the spirit in its seven-fold powers) which are before the throne; and from Jesus, the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Then follows a doxology to him that washed us in his blood, an expression which must be explained by the well-known rites
of

of sacrifice. “Behold he cometh with clouds,
“and every eye shall see him, and they also
“which pierced him. Even so, amen. I
“am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and
“the end, saith the Lord, which is, and which
“was, and which is to come; the Almighty.”

The character by which St. John makes himself known to his brethren of the seven churches is this, that he is their companion in tribulation; the subject concerning which he exhorts them is, the abiding faithful even unto death. That we are required to lay down our lives for Christ would therefore be plain from this book, even though the history of the persecutions were wholly forgotten; and we should be assured of the promised reward, though we found it mentioned no where else. Whether therefore we do, or do not, consider the prophecies in the three first chapters of the Revelations to belong to the three hundred years before Constantine, and understand the ten days*

* Chap. ii. 10.

of

of the ten persecutions; it is still certain that these chapters are full of exhortations to prepare men for sufferings in this world, and for a future reward in the New Jerusalem.

The first vision is of a person described like the Son of Man. From him the apostle receives this command: " Write the things " which thou hast seen, and the things which " are, and the things which shall be here- " after." The mystery of the seven stars, and the seven candlesticks or lamp-bearers, is explained: " Now learn the mystery of " the seven stars and the seven candlesticks; " the seven stars are the angels of the seven " churches, and the seven candlesticks are " the seven churches." The word mystery is no where found in our translation of the Old Testament, and twenty-five times in the New; of which only two or three can possibly be understood according to the modern notion, of a thing unintelligible. On the contrary, a mystery is almost every where mentioned as a thing to be known, understood,

stood, or explained; and the true meaning is, a thing covered, or veiled; concealed, in order to make the more impression when revealed. Such was the mystery of the gospel, that is, the salvation of all men through Christ. It had been revealed in part under the law, by the law itself, but was not openly declared till the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles. The mysteries we now frequently speak of, are things concerning the nature and attributes of God, and all spiritual beings. These are not to be understood by us, but it is on account of our imperfect powers of understanding, not because they are purposely concealed from us. So far as we are capable of understanding them they are revealed; and our duty is to believe what is so revealed, and to regulate our practice accordingly; for nothing is required that is contradictory to reason, though many truths are above it—such as eternal duration.

We see, through the whole address to the Apostle, a general exhortation to confess the faith,

faith, even through sufferings and unto death; to depend wholly upon the Son of God, to keep his word, and not deny his name. There is also, through this whole exhortation, a remarkable connection of the things said with the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and with the times of persecution then just begun, which shews this book to be the work of the Apostle, and not a forgery of later times. Indeed it is asserted by the learned and pious Mr. Mede, (from whom I must take the chief part of what I can say on a subject so much above my reach) that ‘there is not a book in the sacred canon, that hath more human, not ‘to say divine, authority, even from the time ‘when it was first delivered.’

Chapter IV. opens a second vision, or rather a general scene to which belong two contemporary visions, the one concerning the fate of the empire, with the church as connected with it, called by Mr. Mede, *Visio Fatorum Imperij*, from chap. vi. to chap. xi. 19; the

the other concerning the fate of the church, in its connection with the Roman empire during the same period; for Rome is allowed, on all hands, to be the object in view. This begins at the nineteenth verse of chap. xi. and goes on to the end of chap. xvi. and is called by Mr. Mede, *Visio Fatorum Ecclesiæ.*

The description of a throne with a sitter on it, for that is the original expression, ought not to be understood as painters represent it, of an old man, as supposing God the Father to be meant; but it is a symbolical emblem of the Divine Presence, as seen by Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others, inhabiting the cherubim, and both guiding and governing the children of Israel in their journies. The seven lamps before or proceeding from the throne are the Holy Spirit; and the rainbow is the well-known symbol of the covenant of grace. This meteor, being appointed as the token of the covenant after the Deluge, appears here with great propriety as a pledge of mercy. It is every where

where mentioned as a part of the glorious appearance of the Deity, and is called “the faithful witness in heaven.”* The Lamb, as slain from the foundation of the world, standing in the midst of the throne and elders, that is, between both as the Mediator, is “Christ the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;” so called by his forerunner John Baptist, speaking to his disciples, which shews how well the expression was understood. The four beasts, (*animalia*, living creatures) are symbols of the heavenly hosts; and the elders, and afterwards the palm-bearing multitude, represent the church throughout all generations. It is enough, as to the literal sense of the vision, that we consider the throne, with the person sitting thereon, as an hieroglyphic representation of the Divine Majesty, the one supreme God, Creator of all things, eternal, and invisible; and the Lamb, as a symbol of him that was slain, and redeemed us by his

* Psalm lxxxix. 37.

blood;

blood; and that every creature in heaven and earth, ascribe “ blessing and honour, “ glory and power, to him that sitteth on “ the throne, and unto the Lamb.” The description of the book, a roll such as used by the Jews, and the praises of God and of the Lamb, are the contents of the 5th chapter.

Chapter VI. the prophecy begins, by the opening of the four seals, supposed to foretel the events which happened soon after the delivery of the prophecy. Death and Hades follow them, and their power is over a fourth part of the earth, supposed to mean the empire of Rome. At the opening of the fifth seal, the souls of the martyrs are represented crying, like the blood of Abel, for vengeance; having been slain as the sacrifice, they are here placed under the altar of burnt-offering, which stood in the court before the tabernacle; between which and the altar stood the laver, or brazen sea, the symbol of purity, or of cleansing by repentance. To this sea I suppose the sea of
bold glafs,*

glass,* is to be compared, and not to the ocean, as some have imagined; its being clear as crystal represents very properly the perfect purity of the gospel dispensation, as the white robes represent the righteousness of saints.

The sixth seal begins chap. vi. verse 12, and is continued through the seventh chapter. It gives an account of times of great distress, (in terms like those of our Saviour concerning the end of the world) and of the sealing an hundred forty and four thousand, from all the tribes of Israel, being such as came out of tribulation, and had washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb; which circumstances, and some others, seem to distinguish these from the hundred and forty-four thousand in the vision *Fatorum Ecclesiae*, who are said to accompany the Lamb. The mention here of the sun being darkened, and the stars falling, comes too soon to be supposed to relate to the day of judgment, otherwise

* Chap. iv. 6. and xv. 2. than

than as a type; besides, that kings and states are understood by these symbols in several places of scripture, and therefore they probably have the same meaning here.

At the opening of the seventh seal there is silence in heaven; and an angel, supposed to be Christ, offers incense on the golden altar; as Zechariah and the other priests in their courses used to do at the golden altar which stood within the tabernacle but without the veil, while the people in silence were praying without, in the court to which they were admitted. After this, the fire from the censer being cast down to the earth, the first trumpet sounds, and is followed by a storm; at the second trumpet, a mountain is cast into the sea; at the third, a star, called bitterness, falls on the rivers; and at the fourth, the sun and the moon are deprived of a third part of their light, probably expressing the reign of ignorance, which in some degree preceded that of error. These four trumpets affect the third part of the earth, supposed

posed to mean Europe; but the three last, called woes, are more general. The first is the plague of the locusts, whose time is limited to five months, or one hundred and fifty days, that is, years. The second woe is the horsemen from Euphrates, whose time seems to be the same as that of the outer court mentioned afterwards, that is, one thousand two hundred and sixty days, or years. The events of this trumpet are suspended at the descent of another angel. This angel resembles the person described by Daniel, and is therefore supposed to be another symbolical representation of the Messiah. A rainbow is under his feet, and a little book in his hand, which he gives to the Apostle to eat, as Jehovah does to the prophet Ezekiel.* This angel, standing like the one in Daniel† on the waters, or as here, with one foot on the earth and another on the sea, proclaims, that time shall be no more; but that when the seventh trumpet

* Ezekiel ii. 8. † Daniel xii. 7. shall

shall sound, the mystery of God shall be finished.* He then commands St. John to prophecy a second time, which command I suppose he performed in the vision *Fat. Eccles.* and he bids him seal up what the seven thunders had uttered, which Mr. Mede supposes to relate to the events afterwards spoken of under the seven vials.

Chap. XI. the courts are measured, and the angel declares the time of the outer-court, and the trampling it under foot, to be one thousand two hundred and sixty days, that is, years; or forty-two months, which is the same space of time. The preaching of the two witnesses is to last the same time also. The beast from the bottomless pit is at length to destroy them; their destruction is represented by their being slain by the beast, and lying unburied in the street of the great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt; by which not Rome, but the world, seems to be meant, for Egypt is the name of a country, not a

* Chap. xii. 18.

city;

city; and after three days and an half they rise again and ascend into heaven.

At the sounding of the seventh, or last trumpet, Christ's kingdom is said to be actually come, and his reign to be for ever and ever. The twenty-four elders then mention, in their song of triumph, the wrath of the nations, the reward of the saints, and the final reign of the Almighty.

The next vision, the third in number, but second with regard to the foregoing *Fatorum Imperii*, synchronises with it, and begins with the nineteenth verse of the eleventh chapter. As the former vision was introduced by the opening of a door in heaven, this, of the fate of the church, begins by the temple of God being opened, and the ark of the covenant being seen; the Holy of Holies, the most hidden things, are now revealed. We are carried back to the times of the church under the Jewish dispensation. She is represented, with a manifest reference to the dream of Joseph, as clothed with the sun, the glory of Israel; the moon, that is, Leah

the mother of Judah, is under her feet as her foundation and support; and the twelve stars, the patriarchs, are her crown. She brings forth a man-child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, that is, Christ;* which child is caught up to the throne of God.† A great red dragon appears ready to devour the child, and persecutes the woman, and afterwards her seed. The dragon is cast out by Michael. The woman flies into the wilderness, where she is to be nourished for a time, times, and half a time, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days. The dragon sends out a flood of waters after her, but the earth receives it; yet he continues to persecute the remnant of her seed. Waters are frequently in the Old Testament understood, as here explained by the angel, to mean peoples, and nations, and multitudes, and tongues.

Chapter XIII. a beast arises out of the sea, with seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns; and on his forehead the name of blasphemy,

* Psalm ii. 9. Chap. xii. 5. or

or apostate.* His form is that of the four beasts in the vision of Daniel, united in one; his power is that of the dragon; and his time is forty-two months, the same as that of the horsemen, of the witnesses, and of the woman in the wilderness; one of his heads is wounded, but healed again. A second beast rises out of the earth, with two horns like a lamb, with the power of the wounded beast, whom he causeth men to worship, and to make an image of him, to which he gives life; and he causeth those to be killed that will not worship the image, and obligeth all to receive the mark, the name, the number of the name of the beast from the sea, which is six hundred and sixty-six; “Here is wisdom, let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man.” The time of the first beast is forty-two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty years. The time of the second beast, or beast from the earth, is not set

* See Acts xxvi. 11. down.

down. It is plain he and the image must be somewhat later in time, as to their beginning, than the first beast; but probably the end of their time will be the same.

Chapter XIV. presents the Lamb on Mount Sion, with an hundred forty and four thousand followers, singing a new song which no one could learn; they are said to be virgins, and redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits to God and the Lamb, without guile, and without fault, before the throne of God. Their appearance is followed by three angels; the first proclaiming the everlasting gospel; the second, the fall of Babylon; and the third, the punishment of the worshippers of the beast, and the reward of the righteous. Then the Son of Man is set forth under another similitude,* and probably again as gathering his vintage, and reaping his harvest; the corn ready for the garner,† the vintage ripe for destruction.‡

* Chap. xiv. 14, 18.

† Luke iii. 17.

‡ Isaiah lxiii. 3.

Chapter

Chapter XV. verse 5. the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven is said to be opened, and seven angels come out of it, to whom seven vials, or cups, are given, full of the wrath of God. The temple is filled with smoke, as that of Solomon was at the dedication, and no one is able to enter it, till the seven last plagues are fulfilled. The first is a noisome sore; the second is the sea turned into blood; the third smites rivers in the same manner; the fourth adds heat to the sun to scorch men, and they blaspheme God on account of this plague; that is, as I suppose, they are driven to deny Christ and his gospel, as St. Paul says,* "I compelled them to blaspheme," that is, to deny the faith; speaking of his persecution of Christians before his conversion. The fifth plague is on the seat of the beast; the sixth on the river Euphrates, whence the kings of the east, led by three false spirits from the mouths of the dragon,

* Acts xxvi. 11.

the

the beast, and the false prophet, come to the battle of Armageddon. Great Babylon is here again said to be called to remembrance. A storm of hail ensues, but men blaspheme even to the last; that is, they persist in their apostacy. Thus the second vision ends.

Then follows the vision of Babylon,* which appears to be a separate vision, going back even to the foundation of Rome. It gives a minute account of the destruction of that great city, under the symbolical representation of a woman, sitting on such a beast as before described, and sitting on the waters because the beast rises from the sea, which waters are explained to be nations. The scene of action is in the wilderness, in the same place where the woman in the second vision is said to be preserved. The woman that rides on the beast, with a cup in her hand, is said to intoxicate all nations, herself being drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. The angel explaining the vision

* Chap. xvii. xviii.

says,

says, "the beast was, and is not, and shall
"ascend out of the bottomless pit," the
abyss, "and go into perdition." "The
"seven heads are seven mountains, and seven
"kings," that is, kingdoms; "five of these,"
saith he, "are fallen; one is," (at the time
of the vision, supposed to be A. D. 94) "the
"other is not yet; and he," this seventh,
"when he cometh, must continue a short
space. The beast is the eighth, and of the
"seven." The angel goes on explaining.
"The ten horns are ten kings, which have
"no kingdom as yet, but receive power one
hour with the beast; these shall give their
strength to the beast; these shall make
war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall
overcome. The ten horns shall take the
"whore, and burn her with fire; and the
"woman is that great city which reigneth
"over the kings of the earth."* Then an
angel from heaven proclaims, "Babylon the
"great is fallen;" and gives a description

* Chap. xvii. 16, 18.

like

like that of the Assyrian Babylon, a type of this latter seat of tyranny; and a voice warns the faithful to come out of her, to avoid her sin and punishment. Her riches, and the lamentations of her friends, are set forth in the rest of the chapter.

The three next chapters enter into a more minute detail of those things which were but just mentioned at the end of the first and second visions; the scene of the fourth chapter is again spoken of as present; Alleluias are sung for the judgment of Babylon; a voice from the throne says, “Praise our “God;” and the multitude declare, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and proclaim the marriage of the Lamb, who is called the Word, or Logos.* He appears as conqueror from the defeat of the dragon, the beast; and the false prophet, which last two are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Thousands are with him in white, and the battle seems to be the same as that

* Chap. xix. 20.

of

of Armageddon; but it is a victory of truth over falsehood, not of men over men, as appears by the sword of the person stiled King of kings, for it cometh out of his mouth, as the unclean spirits from the mouths of his enemies. Satan is bound for a thousand years, while the judgment is set, and the saints reign with Christ on earth. This is the first resurrection. Then follows the last attempt of Satan, and his destruction with Gog and Magog; and then the general resurrection, and final sentence of men and angels.

The last chapter introduces the bride of the Lamb. She had been mentioned before as a woman;* here she appears as the New Jerusalem from heaven. The Apostle, not knowing how to express his gratitude to his kind instructor, falls at the feet of the angel, by whom he is reproved for so doing. This circumstance, when mentioned in the nineteenth chapter, I consider as an anticipation. The whole narrative, omitting that verse,

* Chap. xix. 8.

ends,

ends, as I apprehend, chapter xxii. verse 6,
“these words are faithful and true.” After
which the Apostle himself adds, “And the
“Lord God of the holy prophets sent his
“angel, to shew unto his servants the things
“which must shortly be done, (saying)
“Behold I come quickly; blessed is he that
“keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of
“this book.” Here* then, and not before,
I apprehend the Apostle’s error and the
angel’s reproof must be placed. We can
hardly suppose the Apostle to be twice guilty
of the same error, and still less that the
angel should twice reprove him in the same
gentle manner; but it might be proper twice
to repeat the account of the same transaction,
in order to enforce the necessary caution—
“Worship God,” that is, worship him
alone. Then follows, “Seal not the pro-
“phecies, the time is at hand;”—even now
they begin to be accomplished, let all ob-
serve them. “He that is unjust, let him

* Chap. xxii. 8.

“ be

" be unjust still;" that is, speaking prophetically, as in many other places of scripture, he that is unjust will be unjust still, he that is filthy will be filthy. "Behold, I come quickly." "I am Alpha and Omega." "I, Jesus, have sent my angel,"—one of the angels of God. "I am the root and off-spring," the first as God, the second as man. Then follows the invitation of the bride, and a caution as to adding to, or taking from, the words of the prophecy; and the whole concludes with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Having thus taken a general view of the prophecies, I beg leave to make a few observations on some remarkable circumstances mentioned in them, viz. first, the mark of the beast; secondly, the testimony and death of the witnesses; thirdly, the preaching the everlasting gospel; and lastly, the reign of Christ on earth, commonly called the Millenium.

If we examine carefully what is said in the Revelations concerning the mark of the beast,

beast, we shall perhaps be surprised to find how much obscurity surrounds that particular character of the enemies of Christ, and yet how greatly we are interested to avoid the infection of wickedness or error, represented by that name, mark, or number of the name, for they all seem to be the same thing. If we look attentively through all the visions concerning the beast, Babylon, &c. we find all the threats pointed at, and most of the plagues poured upon, those that receive the mark of the beast.* “If any receive his mark they have no rest.”† “A sore on those that had the mark;|| “deceived them that had the mark.” On the other hand, all that have not received the name, the number, the mark, or have obtained the victory over it, are promised a reward; and the name of God, or of New Jerusalem, or a seal, is set upon their foreheads or hands, as the mark of the beast on

* Chap. xiv. 9, 11.

† Chap. xvi. 2.

|| Chap. xix. 20.

the

the foreheads or hands of his servants or soldiers; for it is generally agreed, that the setting these marks is an allusion to the heathen custom of marking soldiers and slaves in this manner. In the vision of Ezekiel,* so like in many things to that of the Apocalypse, there is mention of a mark on the men that had not the seal of God. So also in the Revelations, victory over the image and the mark is crowned,† they that received not the mark live with Christ.‡ So that this mark, whatever it be, is the characteristic, the note of distinction, pointing out for destruction the enemies of God, and the servants of the devil; and we are warned, over and over, carefully to avoid it, for that numbers, perhaps the *multitude*, in the last times, will receive it to their ruin. It is therefore a matter of consequence to men to enquire what is meant by this mark, not with an anxious curiosity, but with humble submission.

* Ezekiel ix. 4. † Chap. xv. 2.

‡ Chap. xx. 4.

Sin alone is the object of punishment; and some particular crying offence, probably, must be the mark so carefully to be avoided, so severely to be punished. If we consider the prophecies of the Old Testament, the punishments of the Jews, the promises and the threatenings, we find them chiefly levelled, not against transgressions of the moral law, but against idolatry; the duties of the first table are always considered as the most important, not only on account of the majesty of the divine Lawgiver, but because the duties of the second table depend upon the first, and are secured thereby. Whatever modern philosophers may say to the contrary, he who fears and loves God, and worships him according to his will, is certainly most likely to keep his commandments, and to love his neighbour as himself; but be this as it may, the fact is certain. Idolatry, as the root of all wickedness, is every where pointed out as the cause of God's judgments on the Hebrews; and I think to those
• who

who consider the book of the Revelations, it will appear as plain a fact, that blasphemy is in the same manner the sin here pointed out, as being the characteristic of the latter times.

When first I set myself to consider the mark of the beast, my thoughts, from the usual prejudice against the church of Rome, were turned to consider her reigning vices—pride, avarice, immorality of all kinds; but here there seemed to be no choice as to one sin more than another; all were equally notorious; nor could I say that her accusers had any right to throw the first stone at her. I then took my bible, and began at the thirteenth chapter of the Revelations, describing the first appearance of the beast, and I was struck with the circumstance of his having on his head names of blasphemy, or as in our translation, the name of blasphemy; for it does not appear that each head had a different name, but rather that every head was marked with one and the same name, viz. blasphemy. I turned to the place where

the

the beast, sustaining the woman in scarlet, is likewise described as having on his seven heads the same inscription; and I could not help saying to myself, if the number of the beast be the number of his name, we must find out the latter to know the former; and where can we seek it, if not in the same place where himself is to mark his followers, viz. the forehead? Since then the name we find there written is twice said to be blasphemy, is it not natural to suppose that blasphemy is the name, the mark, by which the worshippers of the beast, and of his image, are to be known; and that blasphemy is the crying sin we are so often warned against, especially as we find it so often mentioned quite through the several visions? A month is given to this same beast “to blaspheme “God and his name;* men are thrice said “to blaspheme;† and the blasphemy of “false Jews is mentioned in another place;||

* Chap. xiii. 6. † Chap. xvi. 9, 11, 21.

|| Chap. ii. 9.

“ men

"men blaspheme because of pain;"‡ all which I think amounts to a probability, that blasphemy is the mark of the beast; his name, by which to distinguish his servants from those of God, who have the testimony of Jesus and his Father's name written in their foreheads—that is, are his sealed ones.

But by blasphemy, in the scriptures, we are not to understand the uttering of horrid senseless oaths and execrations. St. Paul says, speaking of Christians,† “ I compelled them to blaspheme;” that is, to renounce Christ. The beast blasphemes, that is, renounces God and his tabernacle.* Isaiah mentions offering incense on the hills, and blaspheming God, that is, renouncing his worship. The blasphemy to which men are compelled by pain is, probably, apostacy. The death pronounced by the law on blasphemy|| is, I suppose, to be understood in the same sense; not of rash words only,

[‡] Chap. xvi. 9. [†] Acts xxvi. 11. * Rev. xiii. 6.

|| Lev. xxiv. 11, 16. though

though ever so criminal. The Jews charged our Saviour with blasphemy, that is, apostacy against God, in assuming the divine attributes. I do not mean that the word blasphemy is not to be taken, in several places, according to our common acceptation of it; but only, that in many places it carries with it the idea of apostacy, and particularly in the book of the Revelations.

I am sensible, that, according to modern ways of thinking, it will be accounted strange, that doctrines merely speculative, as they are now called, such as the divinity of Christ and his worship, should be set forth as the important concern of all men; and that blasphemy, or denying such doctrines, should be the chief object of wrath and punishment. The same may be said with regard to idolatry, and the punishment of God's chosen people on that account. But these are not the questions now before us. I am not examining the doctrine of the scriptures, nor of the Apocalypse in particular; I am only enquiring

quiring, as an antiquarian might do, into an ancient writing; and by comparing it with itself, and with other books of the same age, am endeavouring to fix the literal sense, the relation of the parts to each other, and the meaning of its peculiar expressions. Taking the thing in this light, we must see at once, that the testimony of Jesus, as it is expressly declared,* is the spirit of this prophecy. The Son of God appears in the first chapter as in a state of glory; he claims the title of Alpha and Omega, and the other attributes of God; he receives the praise and worship of all created beings; he claims them as his own; he unfolds mysteries, he commands, he promises, he threatens, as God. The human nature also is not forgotten; he appears as the Lamb slain; he triumphs as a king; he is acknowledged as judge of the world; in short, through the whole book, the power of the Deity is set forth in the person of Christ, he is the object continually

* Chap. xix. 10.

in

in view, as God and Man. Apostacy from him, renouncing and denying the Son of God made man, is therefore the blasphemy here spoken of; the sin which will draw down the punishments of the latter times, the sin to which men will be particularly exposed, to which pain and misery will drive them. The causer of this offence is therefore justly called Antichrist, as denying the Father and the Son; and when we are warned before of the trials to be encountered, when we have the sufferings of Christ, and the noble army of martyrs set before us, we must acknowledge that we deserve to take part with the beast and the false prophet, if we yield even to the greatest torments, and deny the Lord that bought us. “ Be faithful unto death, “ and I will give thee a crown of life,” says Christ to the angel of the church of Smyrna; “ thou hast not denied my faith,” saith he to the angel of Pergamos; “ He that overcometh I will confess his name,” saith he to the angel of Sardis; “ Thou hast kept my word,

“ word, and hast not denied my name,” saith he to the angel of Philadelphia.—“ Him that overcometh, I will write on him the name of God, and New Jerusalem, and my new name.” The souls under the altar are such as were slain “ for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus;” the palm-bearing multitude is of such as have “ washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and he shall feed them;” the men to be hurt by the locusts are such as have not the seal, that is, the names before-mentioned; those that repented not,* are charged with murders, fornications, and the like, but the chief charge against them is idolatry, the worship of devils; the witnesses are killed for their testimony; the conquest of Michael’s army is by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of testimony for which *they* died; the remnant with which the dragon continues to fight, keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ; the worshippers

* Chap. ix. 20, 21.

of

of the beast are opposed all along to the worshippers of the Lamb, and those that bear the beast's mark, to the sealed ones. The everlasting gospel proclaimed concerns the object of worship. The threats of the third angel* are against the worshippers of the beast, contrary to the commands of God, and the faith of Jesus. The punishment of Babylon is chiefly for the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.† The marriage of the Lamb is the reign of God Omnipotent. The angel is the servant of them that have the testimony of Jesus.‡ They that reign with Christ§ are such as were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and had not the mark of the beast. The fearful and unbelieving are set at the head of those who shall have a part in the second death. The names of the twelve tribes, and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, are on the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem. God

* Chap. xiv. 9. † Chap. xvii. 6. and xviii. 24.

† Chap. xix. 10. § Chap. xx. 4. and

and the Lamb are its temple and its light; the throne is the throne of God and of the Lamb. “The Lord God sent his angel,”—“I, Jesus, have sent my angel,” are here synonymous; and the conclusion is, “I come quickly,”—“even so come Lord Jesus;”* and—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Thus, from first to last, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, his faith, his testimony, is the great object set before us; and consequently we may suppose the blasphemy, which is to be so severely punished, is apostacy. Conformably to this, it is said by our Saviour in the gospel, “whosoever shall deny me, him will I deny;”† by St. Paul, “if we deny him, he also will deny us;”‡ and he that denieth the faith, is said to be worse than an infidel.§ False teachers are mentioned, denying the Lord that bought them,‡ that is,

* Chap. xxii. 20. † Matt. x. 23. Luke xii. 9.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 12. § 1 Tim. v. 8.

‡ 2 Peter ii. 1.

Jesus.

Jesus. “ He is a liar that denieth that Jesus is the Christ,”* saith St. John. “ He that denieth the Son, hath not the Father,” saith the same Apostle. “ He that denieth Jesus our Lord, denieth the only Lord God,† saith St. Jude. Since, therefore, faith in Jesus is the chief thing set before us, in opposition to the mark of the beast, his name, and the number of his name, is it not probable at least, that the name of blasphemy, which the beast himself wears, is the same which his servants receive, and is to be understood of blaspheming “ that worthy name by which we are called;”|| that is, denying the Lord Jesus, and apostatizing from the faith?

With this notion concerning blasphemy and Antichrist agrees what is said by St. John, “ Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not

* 1 John ii. 22, 23.

† Jude 4.

|| James ii. 7.

“ that

“ that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is “ not of God; and this is that spirit of An-“ tichrist.”* By adding the words “ *spirit* “ *of*,” and by the turn of the expression, our translators have, I apprehend, confined the sense, as if the confession of Christ’s being come in the flesh was alone sufficient to prove the person so confessing to be of God; whereas, the words in the original are, every spirit which confesseth Jesus Christ in the flesh is of God; which expression is much more extensive, for the confession is not restrained to one circumstance concerning Christ, but takes in every thing revealed concerning him: For he who confesses Jesus Christ, acknowledges him as his saviour, his teacher, and his judge; but he who confesses not Jesus Christ, that is, he who denies him, is Antichrist, the opposer of Christ, and inlisted under Satan’s banner, having the name of blasphemy on his forehead.

Those whom St. Paul compelled to blaspheme, were not perhaps chief sinners as to

* 1 John iv. 2, 3.

moral

moral duties, but weak Christians who denied the faith. The thing required by the Heathen persecutors was, to deny Christ, to blaspheme, that is, to apostatize; and the same may one day be required of us. However secure we at present think ourselves, a time may come, when the Greeks, and the Romanists themselves, though now Trinitarians, may join with the Socinians, nay with the followers of Mahomet, grown ashamed of their present ignorance and setting up for philosophers. If such should be the case one day, it is plain the worship of our church will be considered by such as no better than idolatry; since the prayers of the liturgy, now by law established, are frequently addressed to Christ as God; as Pliny says, those of the Christians in his days were.

Another circumstance of great moment, concerning which I think the prejudices of the times have mis-led those who have endeavoured to explain the mysteries (the veiled sense) of the book now before us, is the testimony

testimony of the two witnesses. In order to find out who they are, let us consider the peculiar characters by which they are described. They are the witnesses of Jesus;—“ I will give them power,* says the angel from whom St. John received the little book; that is, Christ. They shall prophecy; their time shall be one thousand two hundred and sixty days; their dress that of mourners, sack-cloth; they are said to be two olive trees; two candlesticks; fire proceeds from their mouths to slay their enemies; they that hurt them must thus be killed; they have miraculous powers for punishment; the beast from the bottomless pit is to kill them, when their prophecy is ended, that is, to put an end to their prophecy by violence, after the one thousand two hundred and sixty days; the place where this is to happen is the street of that great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified; their dead bodies are to be seen by the

* Chap. xi. 3. people,

people, nations, &c. that is, by all the world, for three days and a half. They shall not be suffered by the nations to be buried; they that dwell on the earth shall rejoice over them, and send gifts to one another, after the manner both of Jews and Gentiles in their feasts; the cause of their joy being, that they are freed from the torment those prophets gave them; after three days and an half, the spirit of God shall enter into the witnesses, they shall stand on their feet, and great fear shall fall on their enemies. A voice shall call them up to heaven, and they shall ascend in a cloud, but in sight of their enemies. Then follows an earthquake; a tenth part of the city falls, seven thousand are slain, and the remnant affrighted give glory to God.

Some commentators have been strongly persuaded, that by the witnesses we must understand Enoch and Elias; who not having tasted death, they suppose will appear on earth to be instruments of the conversion of the Jews, to preach three years and an half,
and

and to be killed and rise again. Others have thought the prophecy related to the two testaments, which are indeed witnesses, and preach the testimony of Jesus, but they did so long before the one thousand two hundred and sixty years can be supposed to begin. Calvin and Luther, who have been named by others, come too late.

There are, in the account of the two witnesses in the Apocalypse, several allusions to former passages in the Holy Scriptures, and to the ancient prophets; but the circumstances peculiar to these witnesses are, their being the witnesses of Jesus, and their being called candlesticks, or churches, for so is that emblem expressly explained, “the seven ‘candlesticks are seven churches;’”† which are so called, as conveying the light of the knowledge of Christ to all around. From these allusions, and especially from the long time assigned for their preaching, we may be persuaded, I think, that here, as in the rest

† Chap. i. 20.

of

of the vision, things are described symbolically, and that two churches, not two persons, are here meant.

Partiality for the reformation has inclined most Protestant writers to seek these witnesses amongst the Waldenses, &c.; but without considering, that besides their number being comparatively small, their time short, and their date much later than the beginning of the one thousand two hundred and sixty years,—their character will scarcely be thought of sufficient dignity to stand in so distinguished a post; to act as the prophets of God, opposing the whole world while living; then called from the dead, and taken up into heaven, and that publicly before the face of their enemies. Surely there is nothing in the history of those unhappy sufferers to warrant such an application.

One circumstance concerning these witnesses is almost always forgotten by our Protestant divines, which is, that the scene of action, quite through the book, is the Roman empire

empire and the Christian church; the witnesses preach, not to foreign nations, but to those amongst whom they dwell, and they are killed in that spiritual Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified; where wicked Christians crucify to themselves the Lord of Glory, and put him to an open shame. The Antichrist by whom they fall, is, as described by St. Paul, found “sitting in the temple of God,”* the church. The beast, and the woman it supports, are to be seen in the wilderness, in the same place where the persecuted woman and her children are fed for one thousand two hundred and sixty years. All this seems to shew, as far as I can judge, that however Papists and Protestants, Greeks and Latins, may judge of themselves and of one another, and may take each to themselves alone the name of the church of Christ, they are not so considered in these visions; but are all included in one body, one general scene of action. There is, I think, no

* 2 Thess. ii. 4.

promise

promise in scripture to the Christian church that it shall not err, any more than that it shall not sin; the only clear, distinct promise made to it is, that however sinful, however erroneous, God will not cast it off and reject it, as he did that of the Jews; and for this very reason we find, that both good and bad, the prophets and their enemies, are all here considered as members of the same body; and we find also, both in the first and second visions, that the servants of God are distinguished by marks, which would be unnecessary if they formed a separate body, a distinct church.

If the witnesses, therefore, whose testimony is the same, viz. the testimony of Jesus, are two candlesticks, that is two churches; it seems most probable, that they are to be understood as types of the two great portions of the Christian church, divided into East and West, or as now called the Greek and Latin churches.

There is something peculiar in the division of these two churches from each other. It
came

came on imperceptibly, not occasioned by any remarkable dispute, or error, on either side, but by causes chiefly concerning the things of this world, and the princes by whom they were governed; each side, at the same time, going off from the strait line of truth, on which at first they walked together; so that, after a long course of years, they found themselves divided in doctrine, as well as in outward communion; the spouse of Christ, the invisible church, still remaining in the wilderness, concealed from the eyes of men, but nourished and supported by God. These two great divisions of the Christian church, though clothed in sackcloth, though shamefully sunk in wickedness, ignorance, and error, still continue to act the part of witnesses to the truth of the gospel, and the testimony of Jesus; as yet they preach the faith of Christ, though mixed with errors; they still preserve the sacred scriptures, without any manifest corruption in the essential points revealed by God; and still retain

tain the power intrusted by Christ to his apostles, a power not placed in their hands as a temporal weapon, but proceeding out of their mouths.* Within this church, extending through the whole Roman empire, which is the kingdom of the beast, Christ may still have a chosen flock, and doubtless many will find their way to him, even from the bosom of an idolatrous, sinful society; let these, then, be considered as the invisible church, the woman in the wilderness.

Though the cry of “ Come out of her, my people,” was echoed through most parts of Europe in the sixteenth century, and to run from the communion of the Papists was accounted the one thing needful, yet our own church still boasted its not having broken the bond of unity. It claimed a power to reform itself, and that power it exercised; and happy would it have been for the world, if other Protestant churches had followed its example: and if the churches of

* Chap xi. 5.

the

the Romish communion, instead of joining with the Pope, who drove us from them, had imitated us in a regular moderate reformation, such scenes of blood and fury would not then have been acted, to the disgrace of the Christian religion, and of human nature itself. That cry was certainly premature; its time should be the fall of Babylon, and her fall is to be preceded by the angel proclaiming the everlasting gospel; but more than two centuries have passed since, and yet no event has fallen out, that can with any propriety be called the preaching of an everlasting gospel to all that dwell on the earth. The beast still reigns; the kingdoms, into which his heads were divided, are much in the same state as at the time of the reformation; and Babylon still sits on the seven hills, making the nations drunk with the love of riches and pleasures.* The writers of the church of Rome give an allegorical interpretation to all these things, and suppose

* Chap. xvii. 2.

them

them to be all past and gone; they likewise plead for the purity of the church, against the supposal of the whole Christian world being under the power of Antichrist; but here I must beg, that the enquiry may be confined to the prophecy itself, and the apparent sense of the book, taken from a view of the whole, comparing the parts with each other.

We find then,* that the outer court, though rejected, is still a part of the temple; that the scene of action takes in the kings from beyond Euphrates, as well as those that arise out of the seventh head of the Roman empire; that the beast,† described in the thirteenth chapter, is the same as in the days of Daniel;‡ that his power, and that of his substitute, is the power of the dragon, the old serpent, called Satan; and yet we know, that the seat of this Antichrist is in the very temple of God.|| The church, as preaching the doctrine of faith in Christ, is a visible

* Chap. xi. 2. † Chap. xiii. 2. ‡ Daniel vii. 2, 7.

|| Thes. ii. 4.

witness,

witness, (as in the vision concerning outward things, called, by Mr. Mede, *Prophetia prior*, or *Fata Imperii*) but a witness that is clothed in sack-cloth, and liable to be killed. As united in charity and holiness of life, she subsists in the persecuted star-crowned woman and her seed, though concealed in the wilderness, and supported by miracle, (as in the vision called *Prophetia posterior*, or *Fata Ecclesiae*;) but as the true spouse of Christ triumphant, arrayed in white, pure and unspotted, she cannot appear till the coming of her Lord at the conclusion of all things.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood, as if I thought it indifferent what communion we are of, because I reckon the Greeks, Papists, &c. to be still of the church, and witnesses to the truth. I am a member of the Christian church, as established by Christ and his apostles; and I should think myself highly criminal, were I to embrace the errors of the church of Rome; but I do not know, that by excluding us from her communion she ceased

ceased to be a part of the church; nor do I think, as she does, that there must always be somewhere a visible society professing the faith without any mixture of erroneous doctrine; at least things do not seem to be so represented in this book. The star-crowned woman, though nourished by God, is concealed in the wilderness, and still within the kingdom of the beast; for in the same wilderness it is, that the woman in scarlet is seen sitting on him. From all which I think we may conclude, that the church, as a society, is not secured by any promise from error or from sin; that the whole Christian world is the scene of action here spoken of, the temple of God, in which Antichrist rules; and that the Roman empire is the wilderness in which the woman and her seed are miraculously preserved, though persecuted by the dragon and the beast, within whose kingdom they still dwell, though in part concealed.

I am sensible that many will be offended at the supposal, that the church of Christ should ever

ever be reduced so low, as to be considered under the emblem of witnesses slain, and lying unburied for the space of three days and a half, that is, three years and a half, according to the prophetic style. Where, it will be said, are the promises of protection, of continuance through all ages, and of victory over all the powers of Satan?—But let us examine these promises. The writers of the church of Rome, having once confined the promise of salvation, and the valid administration of the sacraments, to their own communion, have been zealous in magnifying the promises made to the church; and the Protestants, as well as the Greek church, have applied to themselves the same supposed promises. But perhaps it may be time to examine these high pretensions; for the very circumstance of expecting too much will probably drive such as have not the love of truth into total apostacy. Such may one day be the case of those who depend upon seeing the church always visibly supported, and are convinced that

that the truth, free from any mixture of error, will always be taught, and the sacraments always rightly administered, in *some one* communion.

It would be well, if some able scripturist would carefully collect those passages where such promises are found; and, having compared them with each other, and considered the sense of antiquity concerning them, would give us a summary of what they may reasonably be thought to contain. For example, the words of our Saviour,—“ Go ye, and “ make disciples of all nations;”—“ And lo, “ I am with you always, even unto the end “ of the world.”* These words contain, certainly, a promise of ratifying the ministerial acts of the apostles, and their successors, even to the end of the world; but do these words assert, that no mixture of error shall be taught to their disciples, or that those ministerial acts shall always be performed in a perfect irreprehensible manner? Does this

* Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

scripture

scripture give us any distinct mark, whereby to know these ministers with whom Christ will be even to the end, except it be by their succession derived from the apostles? Or does it determine the precise time called the end of the world? If the measures of the inner and outer courts commence from the time when the church became a visible established society, may not the end of those measures be a time when it shall again cease to be such a society, and yet Christ may continue with it, under a second, but shorter state of persecution, represented by the state of the witnesses lying three days and a half unburied? In that state they will still be what they were; the same witnesses that preached one thousand two hundred and sixty years are the same that lie unburied, and the same that revive and ascend up to heaven. So that the promise of continued protection, taken in the strictest sense, is not inconsistent with these witnesses, though dead, being still emblems of the church of Christ. If the unity
of

of the church require a visible communion, her purity, which is every where as much insisted on, requires visible perfection both in doctrine and practice; a character which no church on earth dares take to itself. If, as the writers of the church of Rome pretend, the schism of the Greeks be to be dated from the day when the patriarch of Constantinople ordered the churches of the Latins to be shut up, will any rational person believe, that the numerous churches living under the patriarchs of the east, who had been till then a part of the one Christian church, were so no more; but that not having taken part with the church of Rome, they ceased to be members of Christ, and partakers of Christian communion? When, afterwards, in the sixteenth century, a reformation was found necessary, (on account of errors, in which the reformers themselves confessed that they had been involved) those, who promoted it in our church, and who derived their authority from the church of Rome, corrupt as it was, claimed

claimed no new commission, and only asserted their right to reform themselves. If the sentence of Rome, in consequence of their so doing, were unjust, Rome has a grievous charge to answer. But do we therefore suppose, that all the churches which ignorantly still adhered to her, were from that moment separated from Christ, and forfeited, for themselves and all the mistaken but well-meaning Christians now living in the bosom of that church, any advantages from the instituted means of grace? Shall we dare to pronounce such a sentence?—No; let us leave them to Him who alone is their judge, and whose promises, if carefully examined, seem rather to belong to a sinful and suffering church, witnessing in sackcloth, than to the spouse of Christ, pure and spotless, and arrayed in fine linen, the righteousness of saints. Should we attempt, as some have done, to trace up a society under lawful pastors, and professing the true faith of Christ, and go up to the time of the apostles,
through

through the Wickliffites, Waldenses, &c. such a church would be as unlike the witnesses in the first vision, as the church of Rome, loaded with riches and power, is to the woman in the wilderness. Should it please God, amidst the trials of the last days, to preserve a remnant, retaining the essentials of a church, and accounted worthy to suffer for the faith of Christ, though not unto death, happy would be the members of such a society! But I do not see that the existence of such a little unknown flock should hinder the Christian world, though subsisting in branches almost, if not wholly, unfruitful, yet bearing testimony to the truth of the Christian religion, and to the authenticity of the divine word, from being considered as the church of Christ, and its destruction as the death of the Christian religion, left in the state of an unburied corpse, but capable of being called to life again.

The beast is said, in the seventeenth chapter, and in some other places, to “ go
“ into

“ into perdition;”* which remarkable expression naturally carries our thoughts back to the epistle to the Thessalonians,† where St. Paul speaks of “ the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” Of these things, the Apostle says, he had spoken; and that they knew what hindered *his*, that is, Antichrist’s, being revealed. He adds, that the mystery of iniquity did already work; “ Only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord (that is, Christ) shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.” He then goes on to describe the apostacy which will

* Chap. xvii. 11. † 2 Thess. ii. 3. follow,

follow, and to exhort the brethren to stand fast in the truth. It is impossible not to observe the similar circumstances mentioned here by St. Paul, and in the book of the Revelations, as well as in that of Daniel. The blasphemous attempt against God, the victory of Christ at his coming, the power derived from Satan, the signs, the deceit prevailing over such as love not the truth, and the final end in perdition—are all here set down. The time of these events is even in some sort pointed out, for it is not to be immediately; it is to follow the removal of some hindrance, and it is to precede, and finally coincide with, the coming of Christ.

We can have no doubt, I think, that the same events are meant by the Apostle, as in the Apocalypse; but if we are to take the expressions here in a literal sense, we shall be apt to suppose a particular person pointed out as the opposer or Antichrist, and so also in him who letteth or preventeth his appearance; whereas St. John, who alone mentions

Antichrist

Antichrist by name, seems in his epistles to speak of something not personal.* “ He is “ Antichrist that denieth the Father and the “ Son;” which seems to suppose that name to belong to all opposers of Christ, to such as even then appeared within the church, though belonging particularly to some more public avowal of such false doctrine in times then future. I shall not, therefore, enter into an enquiry, whether by Antichrist we are to understand a single person, or an Antichristian power; the enquiry would be far beyond my skill, and it appears at present unnecessary. If a single person be meant, the other sense is not excluded; the spirit of Antichrist did and does work, and an antichristian kingdom is the place where an antichristian ruler is most likely to appear, and yet still he will sit in the temple of God. An antichristian kingdom is as really opposed to Christ, as an antichristian ruler; and our concern is, not to follow either, but

* 1 John ii. 18, 22. iv. 3.

to be faithful to Christ, and serve under his banner, through every age and in every nation; and to cherish the love of truth, as well as the love of God and of our neighbour, that whenever the hour of trial shall come, we may stand fast; which God grant that we may be prepared to do !

The preaching the everlasting gospel to the whole world probably relates to some event yet to come, and in all likelihood much more considerable than any thing which has yet happened; more considerable even than the Reformation, which of all past events seems most like the fulfilling of such a prophecy; or we may rather say, would have appeared so, if the rashness, pride, and folly of mankind had not defeated so good a work; a work to which Providence seemed to have led the way, had men been honest enough to have sought the truth of the gospel in the spirit of the gospel. What this everlasting gospel is, it certainly behoves us to enquire; more especially because St. Paul has solemnly declared,

declared, that though an angel from Heaven should preach another gospel than that we have received, we must look upon him as accursed.

There has been in all times a tradition, both amongst Christians and Jews, that before the destruction of the world by fire (which the Jews expect as well as the heathens) there is a tradition, I say, supported by many passages in the Old as well as the New Testament, that the distressed, dispersed sons of Israel, shall be restored to their own land, and all nations be gathered to them. This the Jews suppose will be effected by their Messiah, coming as a temporal prince, with power, to make them rulers over the whole world. The Christians, on the other hand, expect the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, and Jesus, the Saviour of the world, to reign over all, as one fold under one shepherd. Mr. Mede* proposes, with great modesty, a thought of his own, which

* Page 761.

has

has seemed probable to many. This he takes from the words of St. Paul, speaking of himself in his conversion, as set forth for an example of the long-suffering and mercy of God, pointing out (as Mr. Mede thinks) a likelihood of some such miraculous appearance being granted to the Jews for their conversion also. As the long preservation of that people, dispersed through all nations, despised, hated, and oppressed, yet heaping up the treasures of this world, is a standing miracle; I am the more inclined to suppose that a further miraculous manifestation of power may make them the instrument of restoring primitive Christianity to the world, and of uniting all Christians in the belief and practice of the true gospel of Christ. Whether the possessing Jerusalem again be to be taken literally, and they are really to be put in possession of the land of Canaan, or whether the typical Canaan, and the New Jerusalem, be the thing promised, I shall not venture to enquire.

Men

Men are apt to run into two opposite extremes in reading the prophecies; some, taking every thing in a literal sense, talk of the commotions spoken of in the sixth chapter, as if *they* were to be so understood, and ask where the stars are to fall, as if the divine writer shewed some ignorance in astronomy; whereas it is plain, by comparing that passage with others of the same kind, that by the sun, moon, stars, rocks, &c. are meant kingdoms and states, rulers and potentates; for the time when these things are mentioned is the sixth seal, before the sounding of the trumpets, or the commencement of the one thousand two hundred and sixty years. They cannot, therefore, be understood of the end of the world, though they may be typical of it; the same expressions being used by our Saviour in St. Matthew's gospel.* Whatever, therefore, they may mean as to time to come, they must be taken in a figurative sense as to time past; and we are no more to

* Matth. xxiv. 29.

think

think of real stars, than we do of a real beast with seven heads. Others, on the contrary, give an allegorical turn to every thing, and will deny the end of the world as they do its having been created; the whole is to them only a moral fable. Time alone will shew how far any of the prophecies will be literally fulfilled;—but certainly the present state of the Jews, and their amazing preservation; their fitness, by their general use of language; their residence in all parts of the world, and their intercourse with each other, to disperse the knowledge of truth, if once themselves were well instructed—point out that people as an instrument which the divine power may, perhaps, make use of to revive the knowledge of truth: and yet their strange degeneracy and perverseness, and the wickedness of those Christians who ought to instruct them, is such, that it scarcely leaves any hope of their conversion by any thing less than a miracle. The Jews, therefore, being so considerable an object, on account of the prophecies concerning

cerning them both in the Old and New Testament, it would seem strange if they should have no share in the events of the times here spoken of, especially as it is plain they are not wholly excluded, for the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed ones are taken from the twelve tribes of Israel; the twelve foundations, and the name of New Jerusalem, recall the same idea; all which circumstances, put together, must persuade us, that the conversion of the Jews ought to be found amongst the events recorded in the Apocalypse; and most probably it lies concealed under the peculiar circumstance of the angel proclaiming the everlasting gospel to the whole earth. Our Saviour says, “The gospel shall first be preached to all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come;”* connecting, it should seem, these two events with each other. St. Paul seems also to allude to the same event, when he says, “Though we, or an

* Matth. xxiv. 14.

“ angel

“ angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than this; let him be accursed;”* supposing some might make use of such a pretence to spread false doctrine. If the two witnesses preaching in sack-cloth one thousand two hundred and sixty years are, as I have ventured to suppose, the two churches of the East and West, still preserving the sacred deposit of truth, however mixed with error, the power of administering the sacraments, notwithstanding the unworthiness of the minister, and the word of truth contained in the scriptures, though often misapplied; if these, I say, are the witnesses, their death will probably be the seeming destruction of the whole Christian economy, an event which would doubtless occasion great joy to unbelievers; and then their revival will coincide with the preaching of the angel, and will seem to be the same thing, viz. the conversion of the Jews, and the revival of the Christian faith.

* Gal. i. 8.

Mr.

Mr. Johnson has observed, that if the Christian ministry should once be abolished, no power on earth could renew it. He that stands in the place of God, and pretends to act in his name, must be sure that he derives his commission from Christ; who alone could give such a power, and did in fact give it to his apostles, and command them to appoint others, through all ages, promising “to be “with them even to the end of the world;” from which text, compared with other scriptures, the opinion has prevailed through all ages, that an outward appointment, not an inward call *only*, is required. If, therefore, he who transacts the covenant in baptism, and acts in the name of the supreme Law-Giver, must derive his authority for so doing from Christ and his apostles; should that successive power once be abolished, it would require (says that excellent writer) a miraculous interposition to restore it again; for who could stand up and take to himself such authority, when our Saviour himself, as the scripture

scripture tells us, was called of God, as was Aaron.*

It is well known, that the encroachments of the bishops of Rome have tended to degrade that ministry which themselves call sacred; and it is too apparent, that the ill-conduct of many of the clergy in all churches has made their ministry contemptible; it is plain, also, that the ceremonies of religion are disregarded, and the truths of the gospel confounded with the errors of superstition. May not, then, a time come, when the priesthood being set aside, the outward frame of the Christian church overturned, and wickedness triumphant; all, whether Papists or Protestants, Greeks or Mahometans, may unite under the pretended banner of reason, falsely so called, and require all men to blaspheme, that is, to deny that worthy name by which we are called, or at least to abstain from such petitions, as the churches of Britain, and other Christian churches, address to

* Chap. v. 4.

Christ

Christ as God, which to them must appear idolatrous? And could any thing but a miracle revive the church from such a state, and restore the faith and worship, set forth in this book as the true worship of God through Christ? Former times would have heard with astonishment of such a supposal; but when we already see the divinity of Christ considered as a matter of mere speculation, and the knowledge of Christ set aside in the instruction of children and ignorant persons, because they cannot understand the absurd distinctions of metaphysics; can we suppose, that Christians thus uninstructed will be stedfast in their faith, and ready to lay down their lives, or suffer torments, as the first Christians did, only that they may not deny a doctrine which they are taught to regard as a matter of indifference? Will they, who never took up the cross of Christ, but have spent their lives in pleasure or the pursuit of gain, or have united both in one, will these forsake father and mother, and all
that

that they have, to follow a suffering Saviour into deserts or to prison? No. Such persons suppose themselves to be Christians, but in times of temptation fall away. Error is like a thick cloud at a distance, on the top of a hill; we look upon it with a kind of horror; but the more we approach, the less we are afraid of it; we grow familiarized by degrees, and when insensibly we are got into the midst of it, we think it nothing but a mist, which we may go through without danger, though its pernicious damps are all the while affecting our very vitals. Christians who live as we do, grow strangers to the doctrine of the cross, and will scarcely bear to read of the times of persecution; yet such once more may be the case, such may be their trials. The religion of Deists, or of Socinians, is represented at present as the friend of freedom, as benevolence itself; but see it once armed with power, and the church of England will then probably be charged with idolatry; the worship of Christ will be

as

as much ridiculed as that of saints, and her ceremonies equally detested with those of the church of Rome; while weak Christians, grown familiar with the latter by frequenting the churches abroad, will not know how to distinguish between the one and the other; and the Papists themselves, at the same time, seeing the absurdity of their favourite doctrines, will probably give up all at once, and meet their former persecutors, and those whom they used to persecute, in the wide plain of infidelity.

When we talk of the conversion of the Jews as an event which must precede the coming of Christ, we are astonished to think how that coming should be as a thief in the night. So striking an event, one should think, should surprise the whole world, and the signs of the times be so evident that all must consider them. But let us place ourselves in a situation which possibly may become that of the whole world in some degree, and see what would be the consequence. Let

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us suppose all the ceremonies of our church abolished as superstitious; all creeds, canons, and articles, set aside as a restraint upon freedom; the pretended oppression of tithes wholly removed; bishopricks and deaneries thrown in to pay the national debt; and the episcopal office abolished, to prevent the too great influence of the crown. Then, when preachers, supported by voluntary contributions, are set up instead; let these display their oratory now and then, to set forth a Supreme Being unconcerned in the affairs of this world, and a necessary chain of events determining the fate of every man; let them still preach up the morality of Confucius, of Mahomet, and even of Jesus Christ; while the scriptures of the Old Testament, being ridiculed or forgotten, and those of the New explained as every one shall choose, all primitive Christians, and our first reformers, being voted useless and impertinent, all men will be set free from every thing but *negative* prejudices. Should this be one day the
state

state of our own, and of other Protestant churches, the church of Rome being at the same time as described above, and the Eastern churches sunk, if possible, into greater ignorance; then should Christ our Saviour, at such a time of apostacy and error, manifest himself in a miraculous manner to the whole Jewish nation dispersed through the world, and so touch their hearts, that a majority of them should become preachers of true genuine Christianity, what would be the consequence? The same, probably, as at our Saviour's first coming; those who then wished for a Redeemer to save them from their sins, and were prepared by a virtuous life to follow him through all distresses, searched the scriptures and were baptized; the Pharisees rejected him, because his doctrine was not such as they were accustomed to teach, and because his life was contrary to theirs; and the Romans looked on with indifference, till interest prompted them to join in the cry of destruction. Just such would probably be

the case again. The patient, humble lovers of God, from all parts of Christianity, would lift up their heads, hoping that their redemption was drawing near; the rulers of the different sects would probably try the doctrine preached to them, not by the word of truth, but according to their own particular prejudices, and therefore would reject it; the generality of mankind, eager in their own beloved pursuits, would look on with indifference, and never enquire into the truth of the things related, but cry, there is nothing that enthusiasm will not believe; while philosophers, like the companions of St. Paul at his conversion, seeing a light and hearing a sound, but seeing no man and not hearing the words of him that spake, would be amazed at so unusual a phenomenon; but instead of considering its consequences, their whole attention would be employed in explaining the natural causes of it, and convincing mankind of the folly of the Jews, in imagining Providence had interposed in behalf of

of a nation so despised and so contemptible. Were the Jews even at this time, as things now are, to become, by a call from Heaven, worshippers of Christ, it would amaze us; but would it do much more? Would a masquerade be put off, or any assembly for pleasure be laid aside? Would business in the Exchange be thought less important, or gaming in private be at an end? No, certainly; the more examples there are of false Christs and false prophets, the less will men be inclined to believe the true; the more enthusiasm has prevailed, the more will be the cry against reformation; and the oftener men have attempted to know the times, and guessed wrong, the more they will think themselves justified in neglecting real warnings.

Thus far I have gone, following Mr. Mede's idea, which, however, he proposes with great diffidence as a thought of his own, on which he does not wish any one to build. I have enlarged upon it here, but under the same restrictions; at the same time I beg leave to observe,

observe, that the setting aside Mr. Mede's notion of a miraculous call does not invalidate the prophecies concerning the conversion of the Jews before the end of all things, nor the supposal that this event may be foretold in the Revelations, and be signified by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. Without considering the manner of the Jews conversion, we may say, with regard to the subject now before us, that it is probable at least that what is said of the preaching of the everlasting gospel is to be understood of such a conversion; and that the words of our Saviour, "The gospel must first be preached, " and then the end shall come," are to be understood of the same event.

And now at last we are arrived at that glorious scene, supposed to occupy the seventh thousand years, or sabbath of rest, and commonly called the Millenium; which Mr. Mede seems, I think, to understand of a new and more glorious state of the church as yet on earth, into which he admits the saints of the

the first resurrection, and the sealed ones attending on Christ; and this kingdom of the saints, the seat of which he places in the Holy-Land, he considers as the great day, the day of judgment. At the conclusion of these thousand years, after the attempt of Gog, led on by Satan, he seems to place the general conflagration; during the which he supposes the saints shall be taken up to meet the Lord in the air coming to the final judgment, wherein sentence shall be pronounced.

I have endeavoured, in this short account, to explain to the unlearned, (for I pretend only to speak to such) what I take to be Mr. Mede's ideas of the Millenium and the day of judgment. I am far from supporting as truth what he modestly gives as conjecture only; much less would I pretend to defend any guesses of my own. The only thing I aim at is to gather practical knowledge for myself and others; and if they can reap this advantage from what I have written, let the rest be set aside, whenever any person more capable

capable of the task shall correct my mistakes,
and give a more satisfactory account.

Though the fall of man was certainly foreseen, with regard to the divine prescience of God, yet it is always spoken of in scripture as the consequence of man's freedom of will. Created in innocence, life and death set before him, having dominion over all creatures, and power over his own appetites and inclinations, he might certainly have resisted the temptation of the serpent; therefore his fall, by the preference of his own will to that of his Creator, was highly criminal; and he justly forfeited the promises of super-natural happiness, which himself and his posterity would, by the free mercy of God, have enjoyed, when fitted for that enjoyment by the practice of holiness and obedience in that happy state of trial appointed for them here below. It has been thought, both by Jews and Christians, that this their state of trial, being in no way so severe as it now is, would have been extended much longer, even to a thousand

thousand years. That space of time, which was even after the fall allowed to the first generations of men, almost to its full extent, was perhaps thus granted to them in order to their settling things for themselves by degrees, still under the conduct of Divine Wisdom, so as to make their sojourning here a state of comfort and improvement, though far inferior to the Paradise they had lost. This second gracious plan being destroyed by the perverseness of mankind, the deluge ensued; and its consequences, perhaps by natural causes, reduced the life of man to threescore years and ten, and probably retrenched those means of improving their present habitation, which man had enjoyed, and so shamefully abused. Since this change, which began at the deluge, but was gradually brought on, “the whole creation,” as St. Paul informs us,* “groaneth and travaileth “in pain together; because the creature was “thus made subject to vanity, not willingly,

* Rom. viii. 22.

“but

“ but by reason of him that hath subjected the same, in hope that the creature (the creation itself) shall be delivered, and admitted into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” In consequence of these opinions, founded on several texts of scripture, was built the traditional account of a world where Paradise should be restored, where Christ should reign in peace and righteousness, in which the age at first allotted to man should be completed; in which the wisdom and goodness of God, set forth in the creation, should be justified by experience; and men should learn to understand and reverence the ways of God, should see and condemn their own follies, and be fitted by uninterrupted obedience, and by sincere love of God and their fellow-creatures, for that happiness in heaven, which Christ has purchased for them, and has taught them how to obtain.

It is not supposed that this should be a state of trial; that is considered as already past; but it may be a state of improvement.

Here

Here the martyrs, soon called from the state of trial, may be indulged in the happiness of shewing, by their actions, their love for Him for whom they laid down their lives; here the modest, humble Christian, whose low station in life confined his unbounded love towards his fellow-creatures, and his zeal for the glory of God, to the little circumstances of domestic life, may convince mankind how much the good of the whole is owing to the private virtues, meekness, humility, and submission to the Divine will. It may, perhaps, here be seen, how great a proportion of happiness man, even in his fallen state, might have enjoyed, if he would have followed the direction of Divine Wisdom. Such a state as this was not, however, supposed to be a Mahomedan Paradise. “They neither marry nor are given in marriage,” says our Saviour to the Sadducees, (who probably enquired concerning this very state, according to the traditions of their fathers) “but they are as the angels of God.”

Mr.

Mr. Mede seems to make a distinction between this Paradisaical state of those who shall have a share in the first resurrection, and the saints living on in the world, in subjection to this kingdom of Christ, but in a state of trial. He even supposes, if I understand him clearly, that the state of these men made perfect shall be so far unknown to the enemies of Christ's kingdom, as to leave them a freedom of choice, to listen or not to the suggestions of Satan, when again let loose to deceive; and to follow him freely to fight against it.

I would not be misunderstood, as if I looked upon the scene I have here set forth as a true picture; far be it from me to set an example to any of consecrating their own imaginations. I am only shewing the old received traditions in such a light, as may, I think, justify their having been so universally believed. Let us look round and consider the state of this globe, committed to the sons of Adam to cultivate and improve; how vast a proportion

proportion of the lands lie wholly waste and desolate for want of inhabitants, or because those inhabitants, wild and savage for want of instruction, seem to exist only to shew how dreadfully human nature may be degraded! How little use is made of the ocean in comparison of what might be; how small a part of its products are made useful to mankind, for want of friendly agreement to assist each other in the disposal of them! The free commodious intercourse by navigation, which ought to have conveyed plenty, knowledge, and happiness, to all parts, has, on the contrary, occasioned the destruction of millions and millions of the human species, depopulated vast tracts of land, and introduced vice, sickness, and misery, even where the knowledge of arts and manufactures seem to convey pleasure and improvement. How much of the globe remains unknown, even in this inquisitive age! How greatly is our progress retarded for want of universal language! How slow are our improvements in science,

science, from the shortness of life, and want of unanimity in our proceedings! Let the botanist say how many plants there are yet unnoticed. Let the naturalist confess how little he knows even of the surface of the earth. Let the mechanic judge, by the powers already discovered, what mighty works may one day be produced. Let the experimental philosopher consider the wonders of electricity, so lately attended to, and say, whether we can yet pretend to know even the first principles of philosophy. Astronomy, chronology, physics, sciences all, how imperfect. Even the wonders of chemistry only tempt us with a vast scene of possibilities; and though they furnish us with many useful helps, provide us also many means of destruction. Our boasted improvements in arts and manufactures are scarcely felt but by the wants of those who cannot enjoy their share of the conveniences they afford. How many thousand wretches are sold to endless slavery in most parts of the world!

world! And how many, even in the polite parts of Europe, are as truly slaves to poverty, and wear out a miserable life toiling in mines to gain a bare subsistence, and to furnish their fellow-creatures with the means of indulging vice and luxury, and of making themselves as miserable by unruly passions and torturing diseases, as the others are by their wants! And can any man really suppose that such was the primary intention of Divine Wisdom in creating this amazing world? Or can we wonder at those who imagine a time may come, when the ways of God may be justified before all mankind, by their seeing what this globe might be, under the conduct of that Wisdom by which it was created? Let us look round on the blessings we still possess, and consider what a debt of gratitude is left unpaid, what means of happiness left unenjoyed. And shall these things never be set in a better light? Shall such imperfect creatures as we are, pass at once to a state totally different, to the highest bliss,—and all the wonders of creation be lost in oblivion?

The generality of men suppose they are to be happy in another world, merely because they are not so in this. God is good; he made them to be happy; and they suppose they shall be so at last, without any efforts of their own. But do they seriously consider, that they are in a world, full of trouble and misery indeed, but in which they enjoy many blessings which they have done nothing to deserve; that they and all men must bear the allotted proportion of want, or pain, or sorrow, and go hence, after a short life, they know not whither? Can they think, that if man could be happy, independently of the use he makes of his freedom, independently of his improvements in a state of trial, a wise and good God would have placed him *here*? Yet here we are. Can any thing account for this, but the necessity of a state of trial, of a gradual state of improvement? Could I doubt of my own existence, I would; for reason furnishes me with no arguments to prove, that “there must be, somewhere, such a “thing

"thing as man."* But as I know, beyond a doubt, that I exist, and that some superior Being exists, by whom and for whom I am, my duty is to enquire for what intent I was sent here; and my interest prompts me to seek the continuance and the happiness of that existence which I am conscious I possess. I have been told, that a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness made me, and placed me here in a state of trial, intending for me a future state of happiness. I do not enquire, whether things are thus merely from the will of my Creator, or because freedom of will, and conformity to essential truth and wisdom are necessary to produce happiness; my duty is the same in either case; viz. to learn the will of Him that made me, and endeavour to fit myself for the enjoyment of that happiness which I wish to attain.

I am, perhaps, wandering too far from my subject; but all I meant to shew is, that if freedom of choice, a knowledge of good

* Mr. Pope.

and

and evil, and habits of virtue, are essential to happiness, it is no wonder that some men should think of an intermediate state, partly in the other world and partly in this, to supply what is wanting here, towards training us up for that happiness for which we were created. If the chief employment in this kingdom of Christ on earth will be to justify the ways of God to man, and shew how, in every respect, the blessings he bestows have been neglected or abused, and his gracious offers of mercy despised and set at nought, this state of things may well be called a day of judgment. We are not told with what faculties those will be endued, who shall be admitted to sit on thrones with Christ; but we are most certainly informed, that the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and that we shall give account of our own works. It is not fully declared, either in this book, or in any other part of scripture, who are to be concerned in this great scene of action, who to sit in judgment, who to appear as criminals.

criminals. When our Saviour says to his apostles, "Ye also shall sit on thrones," it is certainly to be understood, "if ye continue in my word," as he says in another place. When St. Paul says, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels," he certainly understands it of assured hope, not of absolute certainty; because he speaks in another place of the possibility of being himself "a cast-away." The same Apostle says, "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain," (that is, such as at Christ's coming shall be found true disciples, professing the faith, as St. Paul and the Thessalonians did) "shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* Those that follow the Lamb wherever he goeth, whosoever we suppose them to be, must also, I should imagine, be reckoned as here present, and to have a share in the first resurrection. It may still,

* 1 Thess. iv. 17.

perhaps,

perhaps, be made a question, whether, by the dead in Christ, of whom St. Paul speaks, are meant all Christians, or only those who have suffered for the testimony of Jesus. Some commentators have understood it of the martyrs only; but the account in the Revelations* mentions not only such as were beheaded, but also such as had not worshipped the beast and his image; which seems to concern later times, and perhaps may take in all the faithful over whom the second death will have no power; though it does not follow that all these are to sit as judges, for on the contrary they must themselves be judged, though they may afterwards partake of Christ's kingdom, and reign with him at some time within the thousand years. If this be so, the dead which rise not till the thousand years are ended, will be chiefly such as have not known Christ; who possibly may then undergo a trial by the deceit of Satan when let loose; but these things are, I sup-

* Chap. xx. 4.

pose,

pose, beyond our power to search out. It is enough for us to know that all must be tried, all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, even those who shall sit with Him on his throne; for to Him “every knee “shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things “on earth, and things under the earth; and “every tongue shall confess to God.” Whether we understand these things or not, the practical instruction is the same, viz. to prepare for the judgment of Christ, and to trust to his mercy alone to preserve us from the second death.

Wherever this judgment is spoken of, it is in some sort according to our ideas of an earthly tribunal; the throne, the judges, the charge, the sentence, and the execution which is to follow that sentence, are all set down; but in some respects there is a remarkable difference. No witnesses are called, no proofs are alledged. Satan, in some places, is indeed mentioned as the accuser; but every man's conscience seems to be the witness.

The

The books are said to be opened, the proofs are supposed to be upon record; by these every one must stand or fall—for the process is supposed to be already over, and nothing remains but to pronounce sentence. The charge is brought against every one, and a reason asked why sentence should not pass, to which the conscience of every one must find an answer, or plead a pardon; for which purpose the book of life (called in Daniel “another book,” to distinguish it from the books, which are many) seems to be provided; in which happy are they whose names are found written, and not blotted out.

The writers of the church of Rome suppose such a trial to be particular to each one, and the sentence to be already put in execution at the death of every man. But surely this notion, though sometimes taken up by Protestants from the church of Rome, does not agree with the opinions of the primitive church, nor with the scriptures, which speak of the day of judgment, and the trial
of

of mankind, as events reserved for the latter times; and the state of departed spirits to be till then unknown, their place being therefore by the Jews called *Hades*, that is, a place concealed or hidden. Thus, then, the first and second resurrection will appear to be parts of one and the same transaction; the day of trial ending with the day of judgment, when sentence is to be pronounced according to the things written in the books.

Before I proceed to the glorious conclusion of the vision, I will endeavour to collect the practical instruction which may be learnt from the book before us; for the labours of former writers in several ages, the ingenious commentaries of learned men from all nations, and my own feeble endeavours, are all to no purpose, if the imagination only be to be amused, or historical truths only cleared up. The great, the important work remains—which is, the applying to ourselves the doctrines here taught; that learning how to worship, to reverence, and to love the great

Creator

Creator of the universe, and for his sake to love our neighbour as ourselves, we may escape unhurt through those trials so pathetically described, and obtain that happiness which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which no similitude, however sublime, can make us comprehend. The understanding must, indeed, first be informed, but the heart alone can say, “ even so, come Lord Jesus.”

Several duties and doctrines leading to practice may be learnt from a general view of this book, before we examine each vision by itself; and that which must immediately strike us, is the example of meekness, patience, and humble submission to the will of God, so finely expressed in the character of the Lamb, and of those who are his. They are warned of the dangers they are to encounter, and called upon, from the very beginning of these visions, patiently to endure the sufferings whereby their faith is to be tried. “ The time is at hand,” says the Apostle, or rather the Divine Author speaking

ing by his mouth ; and so it was ; for the persecution already raged through the whole Roman empire ; and the fiery trial, to which Christians were to be more and more exposed, made the exhortations of the first vision extremely needful. The instructions of this Divine revelation, the example of our blessed Saviour, the lives and doctrines of the primitive Christians, all breathe a spirit very opposite to that of our modern enthusiasts. There is not a word through this whole book that encourages cruelty, or can warrant the taking up arms against lawful rulers, even in defence of the faith. The sword of the great leader of the army of God is represented as coming out of his mouth, not placed in his hand as an instrument of vengeance ; and the same may be observed with regard to his two witnesses.

When he appears as Michael, that is, the similitude of God, leading his angels to battle, the war is against Satan and his angels, not against men, though his instruments.

“ They

“ They overcame him by the blood of the
“ Lamb, and by the word of their testimony,
“ and they loved not their lives unto the
“ death;” which shews, that all the victories
obtained are by suffering, not by taking up
arms. The souls under the altar are repre-
sented, indeed, as calling for vengeance ; but
it is well known they sought it not while on
earth, and were expressly forbid any such
thought; so that we may be sure, that no
more is meant by this than by the blood of
Abel, which is said to cry unto God from the
earth. The servants of God are sealed, to
shew what master they serve, and to secure
them from destruction; but no power is put
into their hands, even for self-defence ; the
victory is won by patience, by faith, hope,
and charity, by the testimony of Jesus, and
the power of Christ. When the vintage is
gathered, and the wine-press is trodden, it is
by Christ alone, as says the prophet Isaiah.*
When the servants of God are warned to

* Chap. lxiii.

come

come out of Babylon, to avoid partaking of her punishment, no power is given them to join in the execution of judgment; on the contrary, her destruction is plainly said to be by those who first supported her in her tyranny;* so that what is said, ‡ “Reward her “as she rewarded you,” must not be considered as a command given to the servants of God to be the executors of divine vengeance, they being no longer in the scene of action; but these words are to be taken as a prophetical declaration, like that in Daniel, “Hew down the tree—yet leave the root;” which turn of speech is frequent in scripture, expressing as a command what is only a prophecy. Wherever through this book judgment is said to be executed, it is either by the hands of wicked men, or by God himself, or by Christ and his ministers in a miraculous manner; so that there is not the least pretence for any to take the sword, or assume a character of severity and strict jus-

* See chap. xvii. 13, 16. ‡ Chap. xviii. 6. tice,

tice, which belongs not to sinful creatures. We shall judge angels, says St. Paul of himself, and of those that, like him, were to lay down their lives for the testimony of Jesus; but all judgment is committed to the Son; to Him, who knew when on earth, and will know when on his throne, what was and is in man; so that his assessors, having no such knowledge, cannot pronounce sentence themselves, but only bear witness to the equity of that sentence which the Righteous Judge shall pronounce. Some plead, in defence of the violences committed on account of religion, examples from the Old Testament; but these, if carefully examined, will warrant no such conclusion. Shall the spirit of meekness, charity, patience, and humility, so frequently inculcated through the Old as well as the New Testament, and so fully exemplified in the life of our blessed Saviour, be set aside at once, because Elias, in the book of Kings, and the two witnesses in the Revelations, are allowed (by the power of God,

God, not their own power) to bring down fire from Heaven? And shall we take the sword unauthorised to revenge ourselves, because, in a parable or vision, the saints are said to rejoice in the vengeance executed by God himself? Far be from Christians such a perverse interpretation of the word of God! No; let us consider with admiration the harmony, the peace, and joy, of the blessed inhabitants of Heaven, and of the New Jerusalem, and endeavour to promote the same lovely dispositions here below, that we may fit ourselves to be with Christ one day in happiness; and let us leave the rest to God, to "Him that is perfect in knowledge," and whose mercies are infinite. According to the notions of some rash enquirers, all created beings are destined to a degree of happiness greatly superior to the state in which they "are, or were created;" others, both Papists and Protestants, with, I think, as little warrant, confine salvation to themselves alone; both, I presume, go farther than they ought.

When

When the Son of God, as Judge of the world, shall come to vindicate the divine attributes both of justice and mercy, may we not suppose He will justly reproach those who have thus set him forth as a rigorous, austere master? But may He not, on the other hand, as justly reprove those who, under such a pretence of benevolence, have dared to arraign his conduct, and to correct his word; nay, even to reject it; who will not trust Infinite Goodness with the disposal of those creatures which owe every moment of their existence to his good pleasure, unless He will inform them that every thing is to be according to their philosophy? The book of the Revelations teaches us to act in a very different manner from these men;—without rashly pronouncing as to the mercy or justice of Almighty God, we learn to fear and to love him; it sets forth the wisdom and goodness of our Creator, the meekness and tender love of the Lamb slain, in the most beautiful and affecting manner; but it sets before us also
that

that Lamb in his character of Judge, with strong expressions of his heavy wrath; and it speaks of the justice, truth, purity, and equity of his judgment, as being irresistible; so that whilst we know thereby the power of his arm, and learn to fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell, it teaches us to love him with the most tender affection, to reverence him with the deepest sense of gratitude, and joyfully to embrace every occasion of expressing by our actions, or by suffering for his sake, how highly we value the privilege of being called by his name.

Another virtue taught us by a general view of the things contained in this book is vigilance. We are apt to consider this revelation as an account of things to happen sometime or other, towards the end of the world, but which concern not us. This is the way in which most men consider these things; and therefore, if they read these prophecies at all, it is with the utmost unconcern and inattention; but such men are surely

surely very much mistaken. The prophecy takes in all times from the birth of that Child, who, under different similitudes, is the great object here set before us; it gives an account of events happening in succession, occupying a long course of years, but all concurring to one great end, the triumph of the Messiah; and, as the consequence of that, to the final recompence of the wicked and the just, after a state of trial, in which all must have a share. We are warned of the coming of Christ as a thief in the night; and as the precise time was never told, and yet all ages have seen some or other of the events preparatory to his coming, all have been, and are, strictly required to "watch;" and "so much the more, as we see the day approaching." Consider the state of the Christian church before the edict of Dioclesian, when they had begun to taste the sweets of quiet and repose; consider the state of the Roman empire before the Northern nations began to settle themselves in it as conquerors; consider our own

own island at different periods, before its subjection to the Romans, the Saxons, Danes, and Normans; consider the amazement of the Americans, when the Europeans landed on their coasts; the state of the East and Africa, when overwhelmed by the Mahometan power. What has happened to others, may happen to us, however secure we may think ourselves. Consider the state of the Protestant church when Mary came to the throne; and that of all England at the Great Rebellion. We are sometimes too apt to frighten ourselves with needless terrors, and yet are ever wanting in true Christian vigilance, which is always on the watch, but always calm and serene, ever joined with true Christian fortitude, with hope and confidence in Him who is able to save those who trust in him. We know not precisely in what point of these prophecies we are placed; but we know some part of the vision is even now accomplishing. A trial we must undergo, and we know not how severe; the mark of the beast,

his

his name, his number, his worship, we must disown; it concerns us, as well as those that shall be in the very last times, to avoid the infection as far as possible. And the less we know how to distinguish it from other sins, the more watchful should we be to avoid all sin. The first Christians, who guarded only against danger from persecution, found themselves destroyed by prosperity; and we who are sunk in indolence, may one day be roused by adversity. May we be found prepared and ready at a moment!

Next to this meek and humble spirit, to this fear and watchfulness, nothing is so frequently inculcated through the whole book of the Revelations as patience, courage, and steady perseverance; nothing is so continually set before our eyes as persecution even unto death. The example of the first martyrs, the sufferings of our blessed Saviour, are mentioned to encourage us; not as subjects of sorrow, but of triumph. We must be sunk into the lowest state of insensibility, not

not to be in some degree animated by the noble army of martyrs, and by the love of "Him who first loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."* But still our affections remain cold, so long as we consider ourselves, which we are apt to do, as in a state of security, and think those severe trials here spoken of are already past, or are not yet to come; our courage, as well as our vigilance, is too apt to slumber. The vision of the locusts, and of the horsemen, was, probably, as little attended to in former times, as the concealed state of the church, and the preaching of the two witnesses, is now. Till we see the seas run with blood, and the Heavens on fire, we think all is safe, and can scarcely spare an hour to consider what these things mean, or to what we may be called. Any person who reads the book of Revelations calmly, and with that child-like simplicity so necessary to the right understanding the word of God, will see that

* Chap. i. 5.

it

it takes in one continued chain of events, in which all times, all nations, are concerned; all are in a state of trial; though the trial may be more severe towards the conclusion, as it was certainly more severe at the beginning than now. We know not when the reign of Antichrist will end, but we have reason to suppose it is begun; we know that we have a part to act, and that it is the part of a soldier enlisted under the banner of Christ, whose mark we received at our baptism, whose white garment of righteousness we then put on, and must keep it undefiled; such is our situation. We are actually called to fight, if not with the terrors of the world, yet with its bad examples, its scoffs and derision, its false maxims and contempt of honest simplicity; and hard is the task in these things so to resist as to overcome. How far our patience, courage, and perseverance may be tried, we know not; but it concerns us to prepare ourselves and be ready; and, by taking cheerfully every opportunity of exercising

cising those virtues, to endeavour to render them in some degree habitual. I am sensible patience is not now a virtue in fashion; to rise up with the least provocation is dignified with the name of courage; but this is not the courage taught us in the Gospel, nor is there one instance of it in this book. To lay down our lives for the truth, is the proof required of our love and constancy; and the patience of saints is the thing every where spoken of.* There is, indeed, mention of some miraculous powers given to the two witnesses, a fire proceeding from their mouths; but, besides that we cannot be certain who these witnesses are, it is clearly a spiritual power which is meant; for as to contending with the beast, their own destruction is the event; even though self-defence be the most they can be supposed to have undertaken, and that only when attacked.

If, then, the book of the Revelations breathe nothing but Christian meekness,

* See chap. xiv. 12.

humility,

humility, and patience, another advantage to be reaped from it is the understanding several passages of scripture, some of which have been most shamefully misapplied; especially of the Old Testament, which it is our duty still to study, but so as the disciples of Christ, “comparing spiritual things with “spiritual.” What right have we to apply to the church of Christ the commands for destroying the enemies of Jehovah, when, even going on to the final victory of Christ, we find no allusion to any such commands? What kingdom can we expect but that which is to be purchased by the blood of Christ; and by our own, if we shall be accounted worthy to share in his sufferings? And what can provoke us to hate or persecute any fellow-creature, merely for differing from us in opinion, when we see the wrath of God poured out upon none but the presumptuous opposers of his will, or such whose vicious lives make them unfit, as well as unworthy, to partake of eternal happiness?

Another

Another doctrine and duty, taught through this book, is the doctrine of Free-Will; and its consequence, a diligent application to the performance of our duty. There is not a word throughout this whole book of Election or Reprobation; they which are sealed, in order to their being preserved in the midst of the distresses of the three woes, had no need of such a seal, if elected and predestinated from the foundation of the world; they who are punished, as wearing the mark of the beast, are not said to be punished in consequence of an immutable decree, but on account of their own perverse choice; the mark is not put on them, but they willingly receive it. The book in which the names of the just are written, is not an irreversible decree, for their names may be blotted out;* the punishment prepared for the wicked is not inevitable, for they are every where called to repentance; and their obstinate perverseness is lamented here, as in

* Chap. iii. 5.

other

other places of scripture; they are warned of the dangers that surround them, of the temptations to which they will be exposed; and what can a tender parent do more without absolutely restraining the will? The consequence of which would be a forced obedience, unworthy of our great Creator, who requires our love, our gratitude, and a willing compliance with his righteous commands.

The unity of the God we are to worship, is also a doctrine every where strongly expressed; though the Lamb slain, the triumphant Messiah, is always considered as partaking in every act of adoration. The power, wisdom, and goodness, of the incomprehensible Deity are set forth and acknowledged by the most sublime expressions of worship, praise, and thanksgiving; and we are taught with what dispositions we must appear before the throne of God, by the unity of one voice, from one multitude of men and angels; by the white garment, which is the righteousness of Christ; and by the palm,

palm, which is the known emblem of victory; which victory necessarily implies a state of trial and conflict, and of hope and confidence placed in Him who is mighty to save. Our love, our admiration, our faith and obedience, are never divided between two objects, nor our gratitude made an occasion of tempting us to misapply our outward expressions of praise and adoration. The virgin multitude are first-fruits to God and the Lamb; his name, and the name of his father, are the name of God—the one name, written in their foreheads; and it is before the throne of the one true God that they are found blameless through the blood of Christ; He that made heaven and earth, is mentioned always in the singular number; the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are set down as one and the same; the wrath of God and the wrath of the Lamb are to be feared and considered as one; the God of Heaven, the God Omnipotent, the Creator of Heaven and earth, is every where mentioned

tioned as One supreme; though the throne is the throne of God and of the Lamb, and though God and the Lamb are jointly said to be the light and the temple of the New Jerusalem. The word, “it is done,” is indeed solemnly pronounced by Him who gives the living water, that is, Christ;* but the same is proclaimed by the voice from the throne;† the tears are wiped away by God, though the Lamb is he that comforts the faithful multitude; the angel is sent by God, though Jesus sends him; in short, God is all in all in the present state of things, as truly as He will be when the mediatorial kingdom will be at an end.

If faith in One God be here set forth in the most expressive words, faith in the One Mediator is likewise most strongly inculcated; and we are taught, that “no other name is given under Heaven but the name of Jesus, “whereby we must be saved.” The saints are represented as our fellow-servants, the

* Chap. xxi. 6.

† Chap. xvi. 17.

angels

angels as ministering spirits; but not the least word is there to encourage any one to ask their assistance, or hope in their intercession. Should we even suppose, as some writers of the church of Rome would have us, that the angel to whom is “ given much incense,* that he should offer it with the “ prayers of saints,” is not Christ, but a ministering angel; it would only shew, that the angels may act in Heaven the same part the elders are said to do, and unite their prayers to those of the church militant, supplicating for as well as assisting her in her state of trial; but this will in no way warrant any one to pray to angels, or the saints departed, or to address them as present; which no created being can be in so many places at once. “ Thou that hearest the prayer, “ to Thee shall all flesh come,” says David; “ Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts “ of all the children of men,” says Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, beseeching

* Chap. viii. 3.

Jehovah

Jehovah to hear at all times, and in all places, the prayers of his people—prayers, directed, indeed, toward that temple which was the image of Christ, but acknowledging, at the same time, the omnipresence of God, and declaring it to be, like his other attributes, incommunicable. And in short, we are told in express words, and those words twice repeated, from the mouth of an angel of Christ, to worship God, and not to offer to a created being any religious worship whatever.

Temperance, purity of heart and affections, self-denial, and the love of God and of all mankind, are virtues every where set forth in this book. All temporal satisfactions are placed on one side, and the love of Christ on the other, and no choice is left, but to take up the cross, or deny the testimony of Jesus; hence I cannot help drawing an argument against the shocking practice of self-murder, so common in these days; but which the law of God, as set forth in these prophecies, will be found fully to condemn. Some have been

bold

bold enough to assert, that the putting an end to our own life is no where forbidden in the Holy Scriptures; but what if it were not? The crime of parricide had no laws to punish it, because it was a crime too horrid to be thought possible. Is it not sufficient that we are commanded to bear with patience the severest trials; to forsake all things, and to follow Christ; to resist even unto death? It is supposing Almighty God to be a cruel being, and one that takes pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures, to imagine, that without any cause he should require his servants to submit to prisons, racks, and the most cruel deaths, not suffering them to free themselves by so easy a method as a knife or a halter. “Why do ye not dispatch yourselves, you wretches, if death be your choice?” was the reproach of the heathen magistrate, when the Christians came rejoicing to his tribunal to receive sentence of death; yet none of them followed his advice, not having found out that the scriptures

tures authorised them by so ready a method to escape the terrors of persecution. Certainly, if we consider the state of Christians in this world for the first three hundred years, we cannot think the faith which they were required to profess, even in the midst of torments, was a point of little consequence ; nor obedience to the will of God, which commands us to suffer the loss of all things without quitting our appointed station, to be a thing which we may dispense with at our pleasure, whenever life becomes a burden, or our impatience makes us willing carelessly to throw it from us.

The argument here set down against suicide I beg the reader to consider, for it is solid, though perhaps in some respects new. It is not taken from the Apocalypse only, for the whole New Testament is full of exhortations to patient suffering all things, with threats against those who shall deny their Lord; and as for the Old Testament, St. Paul has

has given us* a list of its worthies, who not only fought but suffered for the truth, and bore “the reproach of Christ.” They did it, says he, that they might obtain a better resurrection; better than that of the persons before-mentioned, as raised to life again in this world by miracle; even the resurrection to life eternal by the Holy Spirit of promise, which they without us, (viz. us Christians) did not receive; nor could they, without us, be made perfect.†

These are a few of the instructions which a general view of these prophecies naturally suggests to direct our practice; but let us take a more particular view of them with the same intention, beginning with the first vision contained in the three first chapters.

There is a connection of the commands given to each one of the seven churches with the other parts of the Revelation, and with the description of the person who speaks; and there is another thing common to them

* Heb. xi. † See Heb. xi. last verse. * all,

all, which is the expression—“ He that hath
“ an ear,” that is, who is attentive and obe-
dient,* “ let him hear what the spirit saith
“ unto the churches ;” in the plural number.

Here we are to take notice of the first
requisite towards understanding the scrip-
tures, and especially the mysteries of this
book, viz. that child-like simplicity men-
tioned by our blessed Saviour; “ except ye
“ be converted and become as little children,
“ ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God ; ”
that is, ye will not embrace the doctrines of
the Gospel. We are also to understand, that
the exhortations given to these seven churches
are not given to them alone, but to *all*; the
number seven standing here, as in other places
of scripture, for fulness; that which is com-
plete, perfect. “ What I say unto you, I
say unto all, watch.”

Let us therefore consider what is particu-
larly to be learnt from each particular com-
mand given; and first, as to the church of

* See Lev. viii. 23, and Ps. xl. 6. Ephesus.

Ephesus. “I know thy works, thy labour, “thy patience;”—the first is probably to be understood of works of mercy; the second, of zeal for the conversion of others; the third, of patience in persecutions, and the forsaking all worldly comforts for the word of God. In the first, perhaps, we may claim some merit; for glory, not shame, at this time is allowed to attend charity and benevolence;—yet should we, like some of the primitive Christians, sell all to feed the poor, we should certainly expose ourselves to contempt; or should we, like them, subject ourselves to the horrors of a prison to relieve the wants of our fellow-creatures, or sell ourselves as slaves to redeem them from captivity, (as Paulinus, bishop of Nola, is said to have sold himself to redeem the son of a poor widow) I fear we should find ourselves even reproached for so doing. Perhaps the times in which we live, and the difference of circumstances, make less to be required of us; but let us at least consider with reverence even

even those pious excesses, as we are willing to call them, and which, in some cases, they really were, and let us blush to think how few of our conveniences, or even of our superfluities, we sacrifice to the relief of our fellow-Christians; and yet how ready we are to pride ourselves in our imaginary benevolence.

As for zeal, I mean not to persuade any to follow the motions of enthusiasm, and turn preachers of the Gospel, unsent. But how many who have undertaken the office, carelessly neglect it! How many, who, as parents, as masters, ought to instruct the persons committed to their care, give themselves no concern about it! How few, even in common conversation, dare open their mouths in defence of morality, of religion, of the reputation or the interests of the oppressed! How often do we sacrifice our duty to false shame; and blush to seem what we ought to be! Should persecution come unexpectedly upon such

such Christians as we are, alas! “ what flesh
“ should be saved!”*

If we seek for patience and meek forbearance, where shall it be found? In private? Do not children forsake their parents, and wives their husbands, upon the slightest occasions of complaint? Are not the poor encouraged to rise against the rich, servants against their masters, subjects against their princes, manufacturers against those that employ them; all attempting to seek redress without law or justice, when steadiness in their duty, and meekness in their behaviour, would much sooner procure relief. Should the religion of such impatient sufferers be one day attacked by open violence, what would be the event? Let us, therefore, learn one thing from the church of Ephesus, and that is, to repent; let us look back to the first ages of Christianity, and if we do not live as they lived, let us think at least as they thought; and while we enjoy so freely the good things

* Mark xiii. 20.

of

of this world, be thankful for what we enjoy, and be ready to sacrifice, even at a moment's warning, whatever may come in competition with our duty; and let us seriously lament our abuse of that leisure, those pleasures, we so freely enjoy, and of those riches committed to our care.

From the church of Smyrna and her bishop, supposed to be the blessed Polycarp, we not only learn courage to support us in our Christian warfare, but we see* for what purpose we are sent into the world, and of how little account before God are all the advantages of this life. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;" this, and this alone, is the reward set before this one, of all the seven the most perfect. "I know," saith Christ to this bishop and his flock, "thy poverty; but thou art rich." What then? What is their reward? This, the most glorious and desirable, that they shall be accounted worthy to suffer for his name.

* Ver. x.

" Some

“ Some shall be cast into prison, that ye may
“ be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten
“ days ; fear none of these things.”

From the church of Pergamus we may learn to be humble, even after we have been tried and come off with victory ; and not to suppose (a thing, I fear, too common) that, because our outward actions are right, we may think as we please. God justly requires the submission of our understandings to his wisdom, as well as the obedience of our actions to his will ; our state of trial includes both ; and the truths of Christianity cost the lives of more Christians than its moral duties, however perfectly these also were performed. In vain do we pretend to practise what our Saviour has commanded, if we are wilfully ignorant of, or proudly deny, the doctrines he has taught. The reproach of Christ to this church, for suffering false doctrines to spread, and his hatred declared against such, sufficiently shew that these things are not so indifferent as men are willing at this time to think.

think. If our faith and hope are weak, our love and obedience, I fear, would fail in the day of trial; even as our faith will be found of no avail, if not supported by good works.

By the warning to the church of Thyatira, (whose praise as to some things is so strongly set forth) and that for faults which may seem to us excusable, we may learn the severe justice of Almighty God, which we seem now no longer to consider as one of his attributes; we forget the words of our Saviour,* referred to by St. Peter, “if the righteous “ scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly “ and sinners appear?”†—we forget that Christ, when he saved sinners, did it by a life of suffering and a death of torture; that suffering is the lot of all men, however righteous they may appear; from all which we might conclude that justice requires it, requires that sin should be punished; unless, as already observed, we will suppose the Deity to afflict willingly, and delight in the suffer-

* Luke xxiii. 31. † 1 Pet. iv. 18. ings

ings of his creatures. There is something plausible in the reasonings of those philosophers, who allow of no punishments but in order to correction; but how then shall we account for the sufferings of Christ; for the unequal distribution of happiness and misery; and for the constancy required of martyrs in the confession of their faith in Christ, even in the midst of the most severe tortures? If punishment be only intended in order to amend, why is it not inflicted on every sinner now, till the desired effect be produced? Can it be a pleasure to Divine Goodness to see creatures destined for future happiness going on more and more to render themselves unfit for it; or to see his obedient, penitent servants suffer for his sake, if justice require no atonement?

From the angel of the church of Sardis we learn, how odious to God is an outward false appearance of sanctity, and how greatly we may be mistaken in our judgment as to ourselves and others, when, in a time of such

zeal

zeal and fervency, of such trials and sufferings, one might seem to be alive, and yet be dead in trespasses. “ Be watchful and “ strengthen the things which remain, that “ are ready to die,” are words which shew, on the one hand, the tender mercies of God, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; and on the other, what care and attention is required, lest, when we think ourselves most secure of a reward, we fail in the hour of temptation, which, as a thief, shall come when we least expect it.

In the church of Philadelphia, weak yet faithful, we see an example of the tender care of the Divine Providence, and its attention to every little sign of goodness; “ Thou hast “ a little strength, hast not denied my name, “ (therefore) I have loved thee,” even imperfect as thou art, saith He that is holy and true; “ thou hast kept the word of my pa-“ tience, and I will keep thee from the hour “ of temptation.” Such is the kindness and long-

long-suffering of our God! And can we fear to place entire confidence in so generous a protector; ought we not even to rejoice at every the least occasion of expressing our love and grateful acknowledgments of his mercy?

Lastly, in the church of Laodicea is set forth the wretched state of a lukewarm indifference for religion; by which we lose the pleasures this world might give, (though indeed but for a moment) to engage ourselves in a state of labour and abstinence; and yet forfeit the reward of our endeavours by indulging sloth and self-confidence. How odious such a state (a state, alas! now too common) is to our Almighty Creator, we must see by the strong expressions used—“ thou art “ wretched, poor, and blind,”—most truly so indeed; yet do not despair, but rise, “ be “ zealous and repent;” for I chasten those I love; “ I stand at the door and knock; and “ to him that overcometh will I grant to sit “ with me in my throne, even as I also over-“ came, and am set down with my Father in “ his throne.”

He

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, that is, to Christians, in all times, in all places, to us, to every one of us; and may we listen, even now, to “the things which belong to our “peace, lest the day come when they shall be “hid from our eyes.”

Such are the various instructions contained in the first vision, which is a sort of introduction to those that follow, though wholly detached from them. We come now to that part of the Revelation which more particularly belongs to the plan laid down by Mr. Mede.

It has been already observed, that the two concurring visions, chapters fourth and following, are introduced by a description of the scene of action, in which the glorious symbol of the Divine Presence is described as it appeared at mount Sinai, and upon other occasions, particularly (though possibly with some alteration) in the visions of the prophet Ezekiel, and that of Isaiah.* The

* Chap. vi.

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lightnings, the thunders, the voice of the trumpet, are mentioned here as in the twentieth of Exodus; and the intention is the same as with regard to the children of Israel, viz. to set forth the terrors of Jehovah, and convince us how impossible it is to approach an offended Deity without the interposition of a Mediator. The Israelites were soon convinced of this; they asked, and obtained the promise of a prophet, who in meekness should speak to them, and be to them in the place of God. In like manner here we find the Apostle confounded at the glorious appearance, and all creatures in Heaven and earth afraid even to look upon the book, that is, to inquire into the wisdom and justice of the Divine Providence; and immediately the Lamb slain is introduced, standing in the midst, between the throne, and the elders and the multitude surrounding it, to act the part of a Mediator, and declare the will of God. Here, therefore, let us learn with what awful reverence the throne of God

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is to be approached, before which even angels cover their faces; here let us weep with the Apostle for those offences which forbid us even to lift up our eyes to Heaven; and here let us fall down with the elders, who cast themselves and their crowns before Him that sitteth on the throne, and acknowledge that we have nothing which we have not received, and that glory and praise belong to Him alone “ who created all things, and for “ whose pleasure they are and were created.” It is in vain for us to enter into philosophical disputes, or to ask why God created us, or why mankind were suffered to exist, if we are in a fallen degenerate state; such speculations are endless, and waste our time and the vigour of our minds to no purpose. We are called to action, the will of God is the law we are commanded to perform, and therefore that will is set before us as a cause of our existence; submission and conformity to it being the only means, as well as the condition, of our happiness here and hereafter.

Thus

Thus humbled before the awful presence of our God, we are comforted, our tears are wiped away, and we are called to look towards the Lamb as slain for us from the foundation of the world. He is described to us under several characters ; He is the Lamb slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Offspring of David also. He is slain as a propitiation, has redeemed us by his blood; has seven horns, as possessed of all the powers of the Godhead; seven eyes, as partaker with the Sitter on the Throne of the Omniscience of the Deity. He stands in the midst as a sacrifice, as a mediator, as a prophet, to declare the will of God, as alone worthy to be joined with Him that sitteth on the throne in one act of praise and adoration. As the Lamb, therefore, let us trust in his all-sufficient sacrifice; as the Lion, let us fear to offend him; as the Root of David, let us consider him planning the gracious method of our salvation; and as the Offspring of David, let us consider him humili-

bling

bling himself so far as to assume our frail nature, and suffering here on earth that we may reign in Heaven. Considering him as slain, let us blush for those sins which He died to expiate; as a Redeemer, let us rejoice for the glorious hope he has set before us; as possessed of Omnipotence, he is able to save all “that trust in him;” as the wisdom of God, to guide and to protect us in all dangers by his Providence; as a sacrifice he has atoned for our transgressions, and “blotted out the hand-writing that was “against us;” as a Mediator, he has “brought “us near unto God;” as a Prophet, he has declared to us our duty; and as united by the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit to Him that sitteth on the throne, he is become the object of our worship and adoration, for such he is here declared to be. The book is described as a roll, a seventh part of which each seal contains, but in such a manner that they can only be opened in a regular succession; the first seal confining all the rest, but opening,

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when loosed, only its own peculiar part. Hence are we taught another kind of patience, viz. that moderation which restrains the too eager pursuit after knowledge, by which we are continually misled; we learn here to wait God's appointed time, in confidence that whatever is needful will be revealed to us, if we diligently perform so much of our duty as we already know, and leave to the Divine Majesty whatever else concerns ourselves or others; still keeping our eyes on Him who alone is worthy to open the book, because he alone can understand it; for as "no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man—even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;”* and he who is in the bosom of the Father.†

By the power given under some of the seals to sore evils to punish and destroy, we are taught in this, as in the former vision, that a severe trial is prepared for the servants

* 2 Cor. ii. 11.

† John i. 18. of

of God; and we learn to praise Him, who, considering our weakness, has placed us in a situation so full of ease and comfort, if compared with that of the first professors of Christianity; for even the greatest trials to which we can now be exposed, seem supportable, if compared with the sufferings of the martyrs and confessors in the times of persecution. To lose a child we dearly love, is nothing to the seeing him exposed to racks and tortures, confined in a loathsome dungeon, or, with an eye plucked out, condemned to labour in the mines. The greatest straits of poverty to which we can be reduced, are nothing to the being obliged to forsake all, and take refuge in the forests among the wild beasts; as was the case of many a Christian born of the best blood in Rome, and used to all the indulgences which riches could afford in that seat of luxury. Hence may we learn what human nature, supported by Divine Grace, can perform; and here may we see the value set upon that glorious

rious crown, to which we are intitled, as they were, and yet behold with indifference.

By the complaint of the saints under the altar in the fifth seal, we are put in mind of the care of Providence, watching over those whose sufferings and glorious victories men have in a manner forgotten; and hence we may learn to wait with meekness God's appointed time, preparing ourselves, by self-denial and by subduing our passions, to enter the lists, to strive and conquer, should we be called to as severe a conflict; for which we should always be prepared, not knowing who are meant by those "fellow-servants" which are to be added to the number of such as had been slain for the testimony of Jesus.

The terrors spoken of at the opening of the sixth seal, though they should be understood to be expressive of calamities already past, are not, therefore, to be wholly disregarded by us; the distresses foretold by Christ at the taking of Jerusalem, though in their literal sense already come to pass, are supposed

posed to have a farther meaning relating to the last times, and to the judgments then to come upon the world; and so likewise, what is here said of the sun and moon, the stars falling from Heaven, and men calling to mountains to fall on them, and hide them from “the wrath of the Lamb,” now represented as a Lion, and executing the vengeance so long delayed—these things, I say, though they may have been literally accomplished in the destruction of the Roman empire, have yet probably a farther accomplishment to come, and we know not when it shall appear. Let us suppose, for example, that the sudden destruction and total change, so finely described in the latter part of the sixth chapter, answers to the historical account of the latter times of the Roman empire, when Rome, the seat of pleasure, sunk under the tyranny of a barbarous conqueror, whose successors continued to oppress her for a long course of years, and changed the whole state of things in the Western empire at least,

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the Eastern empire sharing also in the distress; still these things may have a farther meaning. What power seemed ever so well established as that of Rome? What scene could be more dreadful than when Alaric sacked it? And yet did it rise from its ruin, totally changed indeed, but not reformed by its sufferings. Such events have happened in other cities, and may happen again; they are the natural consequences of vice and corruption of manners, though an over-ruling Providence is doubtless concerned in directing the appointed vengeance. Confidence in the providence of God may be learned from chap. vii. where we see the four winds restrained by the ministering angels; and the servants of God sealed with their Father's name, for their final preservation, however they may be exposed for a time for the trial of their faith. I know modern philosophers laugh at the notion of a peculiar Providence; but it has been acknowledged by the wisest men among the Greeks and Romans, and by

all nations from the beginning of the world, where any thing like a religion has been professed; it was taught in the Old Testament, and constantly believed by the Jews; and nothing can be more evident than that it is the doctrine of the Gospel. What is religion indeed without it? What is a world formed, we know not why or how, and left to the conduct of blind chance, or directed by general unchangeable laws, by which all freedom of will must be made useless? Can we admire the wisdom of a Deity, who, foreseeing the misery of his creatures, would not prevent it? Can we love a Being removed so far above us, that he considers us only as a part of this massy globe, and sees us with no other concern for our well-being than for the dust on which we tread? What a melancholy scene is the world, if deprived of the tender care of Providence, of the pleasing thought that we act in the sight of a kind Parent, in whose hands are all our concerns, and before whom all our thoughts lie open;

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to whom all our innocent intentions are justified, however misunderstood or misrepresented by our fellow-creatures; on whom, in short, we depend for every moment of our existence; with whom we dare to trust all our hopes; and can lie down in peace, whenever He requires that life he has so long preserved? If the notion of a particular presiding Providence be a mistake, oh! let me still live and die under so pleasing a delusion!

From the belief of an over-ruling Providence naturally arises the duty of praise and thanksgiving, so finely expressed in the hymns of the palm-bearing multitude; a duty too little thought of by those, who, from the pursuits of interest, or the dissipations of pleasure, have little time to think; and, I fear, too much neglected by those who have most leisure. Life, short and full of sorrow as it is, has nevertheless its comforts; "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness;" the innocent pleasures which our senses bring in on every side, ought

ought gratefully to be acknowledged; the pleasures of the mind deserve still more a tribute of praise and thanksgiving to the source of all wisdom, the bountiful Giver of talents, riches, and those other helps, which enable us to find leisure, and furnish us with a capacity for the pursuits of knowledge; and who kindly exempts us from that share of bodily labour, to which, as the sons of Adam, we seem justly to be condemned. Perhaps one reason why we are so backward in thanksgiving for the privileges of this kind, which so many of us enjoy, is our unwillingness to own them to be really such; we find nothing in ourselves to claim an exemption from the common law of our nature, and we feel an unwillingness to comply with the obligations which a state of life, exempt from labour, seems to lay upon us; we therefore satisfy ourselves with the common observation, that the rich and the learned have their sorrows, greater perhaps than those of the poor labouring man; and thus we take refuge in ingratitude.

ingratitude. That the poor have less grief, as well as less indulgence, may be true; Providence has so dispensed all things, that they do not feel all the disadvantages of their situation; but this should not hinder those that are rich, in leisure as well as in the indulgences of life, from considering themselves as in a state for which they ought hourly to be thankful. They taste indeed of affliction, sometimes in a great degree; but besides that their sorrows are often their own procuring, they ought continually to consider with gratitude how much those sorrows are alleviated by the care and tenderness of friends and servants, and by the comforts and means of easing pain, which an affluent situation in life supplies.

We feel, I think, sometimes ashamed of the disproportion of labour amongst different ranks, and the very different degrees of comfort and pleasure which men are born to possess; and nothing should make a man enjoy with a quiet mind so much more than any

any one deserves, but the thought of being thereby useful to others. The labours of the poor are, we know, greatly eased by the several inventions of the ingenious; but these require leisure; and in order to that the assistance of the rich is necessary; with whom, for this intent, a superfluity must be lodged, which with thankfulness they may enjoy, when they make use of it to do good. A difference of conditions is therefore, upon the whole, for the advantage of mankind; but let each be diligent to perform his part, and every one be attentive to the many blessings he enjoys, and daily praise the bounteous Hand that bestows them with such profusion. Why should not all be thankful? The Labouring Man, when following the plough, might be taught to observe the refreshing, healthy smell, that rises from the earth; and to acknowledge the assistance he receives from the sparrows and crows that wait upon him, to remove the enemies of his crop. Why does he, with little or no thought,
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enjoy the health he reaps from labour, and the pleasures felt from the fresh air of the morning; from the shelter his house gives him at night, or that of a tree by day from the heat or storm; or why does he seem insensible to the relish of his wholesome food, seasoned, as it ought to be, by the kind attentions of the honest partner of his labours? Why should not the Rich Man look up with gratitude, when he tastes the simple innocent pleasures of a walk or a ride; the sight of a beautiful prospect, or of a pleasant day; the sweet smell of the trees and flowers; the comforts at home arising from an elegant cleanliness, from ease and exemption from care; from the works of art, and improvements of the mind; but especially from the delightful satisfaction of doing good? When misery shocks his delicacy in any shape, his first thought should be to relieve it; but doubtless the next should be, to consider, with thankfulness and humility, how justly he might have been exposed to
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the same sufferings, and how great a debt of gratitude he owes to that Being who spares him, and requires no return but benevolence to his fellow-creatures, and the pleasing effusions of a grateful heart. Let no day, therefore, pass, either with rich or poor, without some little attention to the blessings received; and let those pleasures for which we dare not thank our God, be considered at least with a suspicious eye, as to the lawfulness of indulging them. And since the saints on earth, and the angels in Heaven, find their happiness in praising their great Creator, let us not lose our part in the pleasing glorious task, but say, and say it from our hearts, “Salvation to our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb; “ blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and “thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and “might, unto our God for ever and ever.”

It has been frequently observed, that the angel, who, like the priests in the Temple, offers incense at the golden altar, is another representation

representation of Christ, as a perpetual intercessor in Heaven for his church; whose prayers, thus offered, are sure to find acceptance. Hence, therefore, we learn, with confidence to approach the throne of grace, and not only represent our own wants to Him who is able to relieve them, but to intercede also for others, yea, even for our enemies, whom we cannot hate, nor be indifferent to our friends, while we solemnly every day beseech Almighty God to bless them. These thoughts are natural; but surely it is highly unnatural, that it should be needful to observe, that prayers *may* with *propriety* be addressed to God, and may hope for acceptance. That prayer should be neglected, and churches deserted, is no wonder; men have something else to do; but that men should dare to call in question the expediency, nay, even to ridicule the practice, of this duty, is something beyond the belief of former ages reserved for modern philosophy.

We

We are now come to the sounding of the trumpets; in which the thing that commonly strikes us, is the severity of the judgments expressed thereby; but I think our attention should rather be turned to consider the great patience and long-suffering of our God, and his care, by frequent warnings, to call men to reflection, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” An angel, after the four first trumpets, gives notice of the three woes to come; another angel, or rather Christ himself, proclaims with an oath, that time shall be no more; and in the vision concurring with this are frequent warnings; so that none can say they perish unadmonished. The time of this vision, if we reckon from the measuring of both the courts, or from the reign of Constantine, A. D. 306, takes in the space of about one thousand four hundred and seventy years. During that space, what has been the scene here on earth? Let us cast our eyes back, not on the faults of kings, or other particular men,

men, for such are reserved for punishment in another world, but let us consider the general face of things, the conduct of societies, which subsist only in this world, and are therefore commonly punished here below. The church was no sooner freed from persecution, than it began to lose its first fervour; several of its ministers became in a small course of years covetous and ambitious; heresies were set up, disputes were carried on with a spirit unlike that of the Gospel; errors were introduced one by one, and ignorance over-ran all; conversions of barbarous nations were undertaken by force of arms, and proselytes made, like those of the Pharisees, more wicked than their teachers; the Christians, and others of the Greeks and Romans, when oppressed and enslaved, instead of repenting, and setting an example of piety to their conquerors, adopted their manners, and became, like them, barbarians; superstition prevailed through the whole Christian world; and Mahomet in one part, and the Bishop of Rome

Rome in the other, brought all men into subjection. Europe saw Asia and Africa, once full of Christian churches, wholly destroyed; but instead of repenting, continued in the same transgressions, and added the foolish device of crusades, in which thousands perished, expecting to compound for their sins by adding to them murder and rapine. Rome, sacked more than once, still rose from its fall more wicked than before; and still continues the corruptor of the whole world. The intercourse of nations produced by trade, and the discoveries of unknown people, have been only used to propagate vice, and bring home new incitements to luxury. The cruelties committed by Christians over those nations they should have instructed, the disgrace they have brought upon Christianity, make one tremble to recite them. What use has been made of the revival of learning, and the advantages of modern inventions, but to fill the world with blasphemy, folly, and vice; which the labours of a few strive in vain

vain to oppose? Lastly, when a light shone abroad, which might have led men into the way of truth, how perversely did some shut their eyes against it; while others, with torches of their own kindling, set all Europe on fire! And shall the patience of God in bearing all this be wholly disregarded? Shall not the few who pretend to fear and love him, adore, and strive to imitate, his unparalleled goodness? Shall every trifling affront be thought sufficient to justify a cowardly revenge? Every offence excite us to hatred and anger? And shall we pretend to prescribe rules of justice to the Almighty, while our lives give the lie to our maxims, and we proceed from day to day to add to our provocations? How dreadful an account must be required of the Christian church for the sacred depositum committed to her trust! An hour will come, at least it seems to be here foretold, when even those witnesses to the truth, the churches of the East and West, shall be delivered into the hands of their enemies,

enemies, and punished in this world in the sight of all mankind—probably to atone for the public offence given by them as a society, particularly by their schisms and shameful oppositions to each other, by which the name of God and his law have been made contemptible among the heathen; this being a sin particularly concerning the church as a society, will probably be punished, whilst it continues to be a society, here on earth; leaving the sins of men as individuals, to the great Searcher of hearts.

As we can only pretend to guess what is meant by the death of the witnesses, so we must be equally uncertain as to their resurrection; but we may certainly conclude some great event is symbolically represented; from which we may, even at present, collect some instruction, and chiefly this—to hope, as the Apostle says, even against hope. Let us consider the object here set before us; two witnesses of the truth, who for one thousand two hundred and sixty years, or nearly that time,

time, have preached, clothed in sackcloth, miraculously supported by God against the whole power of Satan, lie now at last deprived of life, unburied, and exposed to the insults of their bitter enemies, who feast and rejoice over them, and according to the custom of both the Hebrews and Heathen nations, send presents and portions of sacrifices to one another, to express their joy and their union in this triumph; however disunited in other respects. What hope is now left to those that believe their prophecy? Who dares own himself as their disciple? Who will vindicate their character from the vile slanders to be thrown on them? Who will venture now to stand up for the testimony of Jesus? All hide themselves, or stand amazed; when, lo! a voice from Heaven raises them from the ground, puts life into their cold clay, and calls them up, even to Heaven. I know all this is only a vision; and so was the vision of the dead bones raised to life, which was shewn to Ezekiel; but such visions

sions are not idle dreams; some great event, some useful instruction, is certainly intended; the event we cannot foresee; but the instruction is very obvious. “ Though all should be “ offended, yet will not I,” said St. Peter, too rashly confiding in his own strength. Though all should be offended, let us trust in the Divine mercy and protection, should every one of us say, and never give up the glorious hope that is in us; never forsake the law of our God; never deny our Saviour; but say, and say it boldly, with St. Paul—“ Who “ shall separate us from the love of Christ?”

The rest of this vision is only a summary account of the same things which we shall find more fully related in the concurring vision concerning *Fat. Ecclesiae*, to which I now pass on.

In the first part of it* is set down the conflict of Christ, his angels, and his servants, from his birth, through the times of persecution; his victory; the fall, but not the de-

* From chap. xi. 19. to the end of chap. xii. struc-

struction of Satan, the devil's persecution of the church and the remnant of her seed, and the flight of the woman concealed in the wilderness for one thousand two hundred and sixty years, or to the end of one thousand nine hundred and twenty-six years. We know not in what precise point of these one thousand two hundred and sixty years we now are, but we know that some part of this period is ever running on; we see the bright examples set before us, we hear what trials are to come, and what great rewards we are sure to obtain; if wickedness seem triumphant, we know it is the time of Satan's kingdom; if truth seem fled from the earth, we know the church is preserved by God, but that it is in the wilderness; we know our calling, and in whom we confide. What hinders us, then, from going on in simplicity of heart to perform our part; to learn and do our duty, to serve our God, do good to all, and trust to Him who hath redeemed us? If all be a dream, what do we lose? What

change would we wish to make in our behaviour, could we persuade ourselves to forsake Christ, and no longer to believe the Gospel? "His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." We wish, indeed, sometimes to follow our passions, we are sometimes led away by them; but did they ever procure us any pleasure worth our desiring? do they leave any sense of happiness when past? Here I must say, as I did before, if I am deceived, oh! let none ever be so cruel as to undeceive me!

In the description of our enemies, the beasts, &c. we see those vices we ought to avoid. In the first beast, that is, the anti-christian kingdom itself, we find treachery expressed by the leopard, sullen obstinate cruelty in the bear, and fierce active rage in the lion; all characters too readily to be pointed out in the tyrannic empire which has been supposed to be here represented. In the second beast, or ruler of this kingdom, we find hypocrisy in the assumed character
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of the Lamb, and deceit of every kind in the false miracles. Nothing can be more truly antichristian than these dispositions; more opposite to Christ, whose meekness and simplicity, whose truth and unbounded charity, it is our glory to imitate. The restraint on buying and selling, that is, on all the enjoyments of life, which none are allowed to partake of but those who receive the mark, shews the rapacious covetousness and proud oppression of these rulers; and how needful the warning of our blessed Master, that we should forsake all that we have, and take up the cross and follow him.

In the company attending the Lamb with a song peculiar to themselves, is set forth the great reward of undefiled innocence, and of that child-like simplicity so expressly recommended by our blessed Saviour.

The exhortation of the angel having the everlasting Gospel needs no explanation. "Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come;" (that is, it is

is near at hand) “ and worship Him that
“ made Heaven and earth, and the sea, and
“ the fountains of water!” As this passage
seems to give hopes of a fresh offer of peace
to the Jews and Heathen, it is allowed, I
hope, also to indulge the pleasing thought,
and to praise the goodness of that God, whose
mercy endureth for ever. As the Jews were
commanded to offer peace before they en-
gaged in battle, so this proclaiming of the
gospel of peace seems immediately to precede
the great day of vengeance. If men were
really Christians, or, I may say, if Christ-
ians were really men, they would look with
a very different eye upon the Jews and upon
the heathen world, from what they seem to
do. Sunk as the former are in the love of
riches, in ignorance and unbelief, they still
are an object of compassion to the God that
made them, and should be so to us; and
though the others, stupid and insensible, and
given up to many shameful vices, can claim
from God no right to more than by their
birth

birth they would have enjoyed; yet sure from us they ought to receive that kind compassion, those helps, those means of instruction, which the goodness of God has enabled us to bestow; but which, alas!—I say no more; let us at least grant them our prayers, let us sincerely beseech the Almighty that they may find mercy, and then be cruel if we can.

The second angel proclaims the fall of Babylon; and the third, the punishment prepared for the wicked, particularly those who shall deny their Master, and enlist themselves under the banner of his enemy. “Here is the patience of the saints; here they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;” for both are required, even faith and good works; “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” Then cometh the Son of Man on a cloud, to reap his harvest; and the ministers of his justice, to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, and gather the grapes ripe for destruction; and then appears the triumphant multitude; for

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the justice of God, as well as his mercy, must one day be the object of our admiration, though here an humble sense of our own offences leaves us no power but to cry for mercy.

If, as some say, it is inconsistent with the goodness of God to inflict punishment, or suffer his creatures to be afflicted, we must give up the Gospel; for nothing can be more evident than the matter of fact, that good men in all ages have been tried by sufferings; and that Christ himself, who knew no sin, suffered for us. But if we give up the scripture on that account, what then? Will it not still be evident, that there are such things in the world as pain and sorrow, and that the good must suffer as well as the wicked? And this matter of fact, which cannot be denied, must be reconciled with the wisdom, goodness, and justice of the Creator, by some method which reason alone cannot discover. Hence it will follow, that whatever we think as to the threatenings of eternal punishment, the state of those which have

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not the knowledge of the truth, and such questions, we must set aside all those arguments, which are drawn from a supposed inconsistency of certain doctrines with the Divine nature. We must not argue concerning the Divine attributes as if we knew them, and say He must be unjust, or want wisdom, if things are so and so; for in fact we can know nothing of the Deity, but what Himself hath revealed to us. Our business is to enquire what he has taught us; to live as he has commanded; to use our utmost endeavours to shew our love and gratitude for the blessings we enjoy, and those we yet hope for; and trust with a stedfast assurance on his goodness and mercy towards ourselves and all mankind; waiting with patience for the manifestation of his justice and other glorious attributes, of which at present we can have but imperfect notions.*

* See Mark ix. 43, as also the many places where sufferings are foretold to the righteous; or inflicted for a trial of their faith and obedience; as Gen. xxii. 1. xxxvii. 18. xlvi. 9. Exod. v. 22. Deut. viii. 2. &c. Rev. ii. 10. vii. 14.

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The seven last plagues are then poured out, which recall the various instructions already set down; and then we pass on to the particular vision concerning Babylon, in which her sins and her punishment are most pathetically described.

That by Babylon is meant a city, is expressly said, and we cannot well be at a loss to say what city it is; but be that as it will, let the whole be taken in a figurative sense, still the instruction to us is the same. We see here worldly prosperity at the highest; riches and luxury enjoyed to the full; the arts, the ornaments, and pleasures of life; nothing is wanting; wickedness rides triumphant, and, however cruel and treacherous, wears the face of joy, and seems to dispense nothing but happiness; from this state of worldly bliss we are warned, by a voice from Heaven, to come forth, to leave those things which most engage our affections, for fear of a distant danger, of which no signs appear, or none that men will attend unto;

unto; and lo! in a moment a sudden destruction turns all this triumph into the most dreadful calamity; those hands that raised this glorious structure are the first to pull it to the ground; "Babylon is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils;" all that once loved her, forsake her now, and stand at a distance, crying, alas! that great city! Thus shall Babylon be thrown down, and "be found no more at all." What can be a more lively description of the vanity of worldly enjoyments, what a more awakening call to prepare for judgment, and to set our hearts on things above? The destruction of Babylon is followed by the triumph of the Lamb, his victory, and his marriage; and now the scene is changed; the great Creator of all things both in Heaven and earth, (for such the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament proclaim him to be) comes forth to disperse the powers of Satan, and restrain the dragon himself for a time. The faithful servants of the blessed Jesus, who, like him,
were

were before men the objects of shame and derision, and like him also, meekly laid down their lives to bear witness to the truth, now appear with him in glory, and are said to reign with him on earth; restoring to the whole creation that beauty, harmony, and order, which the wickedness of man had destroyed; and enjoying for a thousand years those blessings of peace, those improvements of knowledge, those advantages of society, of mutual love, which might have been enjoyed by all the sons of Adam, and have raised them by a life of righteousness to the throne of glory. Such is the scene, whether real or symbolical, which the last chapters of this book set before us. In presence of this awful court, as here represented, perhaps, the whole history of mankind will be rehearsed; the causes and effects of natural events will be explained; the actions and the most secret thoughts of all men be revealed; and the conduct of Divine Providence be fully justified. Perhaps, (since every idle word must

must be accounted for, though not in itself criminal) our foolish thoughts, our vain conceits of our own merit, those artful disguises by which we endeavour to deceive men, will here be manifested before all, for the eternal confusion of the impenitent, and to fix in the minds of those that shall be saved, an humble sense of their own weakness, and an unbounded confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of their God. We are apt in this life to excuse our faults as unavoidable; our sins appear always trifling, if they do not rise to the highest pitch; if free from theft, from murder and adultery, we think we may be allowed even to account ourselves righteous; while, perhaps, those criminals whom our laws condemn, may seem less guilty before God than those who, without any sense of gratitude, enjoy the blessings with which Providence entrusted them for the benefit of mankind. All sins are not alike criminal; but I doubt we are very unfit to weigh the difference; he who indulges malice in his heart,

heart, and by pitiful contrivances endeavours to hurt another, would probably, under different circumstances, have been led on to poison or assassinate his enemy. She who spends her whole thoughts on dress, and endeavours to allure mankind to admire her, only to gratify a foolish vanity, to triumph over her fellows, and indulge more freely an unbounded love of pleasure, has sometimes less right to boast of her chastity, than the poor, deceived, forsaken wretch, who earns her bread by prostitution. The studious or active philosophers, who by their pursuits of knowledge are grown insensible to the temptations of pleasure and ambition, too often indulge a great degree of pride, and laugh at the men of the world, whom they allow themselves to despise, only because they cannot taste or attain to the same enjoyments. The man who is wholly engaged in purchasing riches, is seldom disturbed by the pursuit of power or pleasure; those who plod on in domestic life, without considering its

its extensive duties, are often more engrossed by attention to a few shillings, than others are in getting pounds; and these last, while they see no great faults in themselves to be amended, suffer their hearts to grow hardened to the wants of others, their tender feelings to lie unemployed, and devotion to sink into a dull lifeless habit. We know our hearts cannot be concealed from God; but it might be of use to many of us to consider the day of judgment in the light in which this book seems to place it, as a general review of whatever has passed here on earth, bringing to light every motive of action, every thought of the heart, and even every idle word, as our Saviour expressly says; and all this in the awful presence of Christ, of his holy angels, of those just men called to sit with Christ in his throne, and of our fellow-criminals, whose frowns and whose laughter we have stood in awe of here below, so far as often to sacrifice to such considerations our duty towards God, our faith, the rights
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of truth and justice, and the peace of a quiet conscience.

The severity of this scrutiny does not, I suppose, consist in the bringing every idle word to punishment, as of itself criminal, but in bringing it forth to be exposed to censure; the trial is severe; the sentence will no doubt be merciful.

The intent of this severe inquest is, to justify before the whole world the righteousness of God; to make known his glorious attributes; to convict the wicked, and exalt the just, and to humble those who exalted themselves here below, and were content if by any art they could conceal their imperfections; that now, acknowledging their own misery and the justice of their Judge, they may be fitted to obtain mercy.

This representation of things (as I have said upon other occasions) may, if we please, be considered as a picture, not as a reality; but let us consider at the same time that it is a picture of something that will be real; a picture

picture by which we are to be instructed; and let us therefore think on every occasion, what our feelings would be in the presence of such a tribunal; and whether any “fiery “trial” could go beyond it? Whatever is meant thereby, the scene is truly sublime and awful, and lifts the imagination above those things, which so fully engage the affections of most men here below.

Enthusiasm here, as every where, has been very prejudicial to true religion; but there is no reason that we should give up any part of those instructions which God has blessed us with, because others have abused them to their own confusion. If any one be averse to the notions of Mr. Mede and others, as to a Millenium, that is, a local paradise, he is free to understand the whole as a typical representation of the joys of Heaven, which certainly are the ultimate wish of all true Christians; but let him seriously meditate on these great objects, and compare them with other places of scripture; and let him learn

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to value as he ought, that glorious reward set before him under these figurative representations; and ere it be too late, let him prepare for that judgment and fiery trial, which, whatever it be, will certainly search even to the very bottom of his heart; and lay open to himself, and before all men, those sins and foolish arts of hypocrisy, which now are known only to God.

One thing let me yet add with regard to Christ's kingdom, considered as being eternal; and that is, the great lesson to be learned from thence, of subjection to the Divine wisdom and will; a duty which we seem sent into this world chiefly to learn; a duty which, once learnt, must constitute our everlasting reward. We can form no idea of the state of blessed angels, except that they know and perform with joy the will of their Creator; we see the Saviour of the world proposing to himself no other happiness on earth; and we find him, when his kingdom here is at an end, rewarded to all eternity as man,*

man,* by a state of subjection; though sitting at the right hand of God, nay, sitting with him in his throne. Far be it then from creatures of an hour to pretend to wisdom or praise, to seek their own glory, or wish to be at their own disposal; if God be truth, essential truth, justice, purity, and wisdom, no being can be happy, who is not guided, as well as supported, by him. The more we approach to this blessed state, the nearer are we to perfection, and the nearer also to a capacity of enjoying the happiness prepared for us from all eternity.

What I have here set down is but a small part of those useful reflections which the consideration of the day of judgment, followed by the sentence of the just Judge, at the second resurrection, must naturally produce; but I shall pass on to the concluding vision contained in the two last chapters.

If we were used to the symbolical method of instruction, we should probably find an

* 1 Cor. xv. 28.

hidden

hidden sense in every part of the description of the New Jerusalem; the gates of pearl expressing perfect purity, the walls of gold security from corruption, would lead us to understand the rest; but any thing further of this kind I do not attempt. Several of the same instructions, as in the former visions, are again repeated in this; but one thing particularly deserves our notice, and that is, the regard to be paid to sincerity and truth. "These words are true and faithful," is a sentence twice repeated. The walls of the city, said to be pure gold, an emblem of pure unadulterated faith, as well as of incorruption, are at the same time "clear as crystal," an emblem of truth and sincerity. Liars are ranked in two places with murderers and whoremongers, idolaters and sorcerers, and in either place are excluded the city of the blessed; and lastly, a sore punishment is denounced against such as shall falsely add unto or take from the words of this prophecy. If the things contained in this book are to be

be taken in a chronological order, as for the most part, excepting the two synchronizing visions, they certainly are, this instruction concerning truth will, with great propriety, be found placed with the things concerning the very last time; for when was such instruction so much wanted? Truth is become a jest; sincerity so uncommon as not to be believed, even when most real; lies, and too often perjury, profane the court, the bar, and even common conversation; officious lies, lies to please and flatter, lies to deceive in trade, lies from fear or vanity, are all counted as trifling slips of the tongue; often as wholly innocent; sometimes as praise-worthy, as necessary and unavoidable; and where will all this falsehood end, but in univeral confusion, suspicion, and distrust? Will faith in the God of Epicurus teach us to reverence an oath? Will the doctrine of no particular Providence make us act as in the presence of the God of truth? Or will a life of indolence and pleasure, of flattery and dissimulation, prepare us for bearing

bearing witness to the truth at the hazard of our very lives? No: Let us leave all hypocrisy and pretence, and boldly own that we are Christians; that we believe in Him who is truth itself, who sees our most secret thoughts, and will one day bring them into judgment; let us love Him who first loved us, and follow our blessed Saviour in truth and sincerity, having our eyes fixed on the glorious reward promised by Him who cannot lie, who cannot deny himself; and with joy let us say, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.” These words, which with the doxology conclude the whole, call to our minds a pleasing truth, taught throughout this book as well as in other parts of the scripture, that death is swallowed up in Christ’s victory, and has therefore now no sting; “it is better for me,” says St. Paul, “to depart and be with Christ; Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;” in short, there is not an expression, I think, through the whole prophecy, that tends to make us look on death with sorrow, or even with fear. The melancholy

melancholy idea of passing to an unknown state of darkness and separation from all the comforts of life, which is the transient view that strikes most men, is not once mentioned; the Heathen notion of purging flames seems likewise unknown to the author of this book; and the late revived error of the sleep of the soul may plainly be confuted from it. All are considered here as in a state of activity; the souls under the altar, the palm-bearing multitudes, the virgin-company that follow the Lamb, all are considered as beings living and acting, enjoying a degree of happiness, though capable of improvement; in short, they are described as with Christ, under his protection, free from any torment, and enjoying that satisfaction which a virtuous disposition, acquired by labour and a confidence in the mercies of God, must produce. He who truly loves God must be happy, whatever state he is in, unless, for any short space, while outward torment is inflicted, of which we find no mention here, when past the

the gates of death, until the final sentence on Satan, Death, and Hades.

The mention of *Hades*, or *Hell*, understood by the Jews of the place of departed souls,* shews the separate existence of the soul without the body to be the doctrine of this book; against materialism.

What the perceptions of souls separated from the body can be, is a thing wholly unknown to us in this life; but it is plain they are here supposed to be living active beings; and yet it is as plain also, that the body is not considered as a clog to the soul, since its rising again is to be the time of the soul's entering into complete bliss for ever. Let us not therefore consider ourselves in this state of mortality as under constraint, or excuse our transgressions, as if the mortal body pressing down the soul were the cause of all our errors; but let us consider our bodies as instruments fitted for the use of the soul, essential to her perfect happiness, and which,

* See Ps. xvi. 10. Acts ii. 27.

by

by habits of virtue, must be made the means of her acquiring such knowledge and such affections as are requisite to enjoy the state of perfect bliss prepared for us. Let us not amuse our imaginations with searching after those things which God has hid from us; but in life, or in death, “ cast all our care “ upon Him who careth for us.” Let us not endeavour to avoid the fear of death, by considering it as a state of insensibility; if it were so it would be all one, so long as a final judgment is supposed to awaken us again into being. Nor let us flatter ourselves with the hopes of atoning for our sins in another world, by any state of purification; though we have great reason to expect a state of improvement, if we depart truly initiated in the school of Christ; to *such* death is gain, and nothing but praise and joy is here supposed to be *their* portion. Why then should we look upon death with terror? Why be dragged like criminals into the presence of Him who is our Saviour, our only hope?

Why

Why not learn here to receive the sentence with joy? If, indeed, we suppose a person, whose life has been wholly criminal, to be just awakened to consideration by the fears of another life, we may suppose also such an one to wish a little respite; “ Oh! spare “ me a little, that I may recover my strength,” that I may learn to fear and love God, and do my duty. All this is certainly very natural; but for those, who from their childhood have endeavoured, though perhaps with but a faint endeavour, to live according to the Gospel; and to such as, by a sincere repentance, have recovered from a state of sin, and forsaken the vicious habits they were led into by the temptations of the world, and who boldly profess themselves to be Christians; to such death should be considered as a kind indulgence, by which the state of trial or of penance is abridged, and their virtuous intention secured from the dangers to which the frailty of man is ever exposed. If a labourer, hired into the vineyard, stands idle,

or

or does any thing to hinder his master's work, he may justly fear to be surprised in such a situation; but if, recollecting himself, he has endeavoured, by his diligence in the following hours, to shew his sorrow for what is past, (though he cannot make up the loss, not being able to do more than his duty) he may still hope to find mercy and forgiveness; and though he fear the presence of his Judge, he will be as willing to be called at the tenth hour, as to stay till the conclusion of the day; sensible that in a longer space he could do nothing to deserve the reward, but must, first or last, depend upon the gracious favour and goodness of his Lord. The same is the case of him that has laboured from the morning; he has but done his duty, and that with more or less imperfection; and will such an one be concerned or grieve, that being called home at noon his task is less, and his labour at an end? If the Lord of the vineyard be pleased to accept a few hours for a day's work, it is probably because he

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sees our weakness, and spares us those trials we could not have encountered with success. The truth is, we work as if we could do nothing of ourselves, and yet value our work, as if it could procure us, of itself, a rich reward. Oh! could I live a few years longer, says a fearful dying person, I would endeavour to redeem the time past, and purchase the reward of "Well done, thou faithful servant." But what ground have you to suppose this? What is there to change in your outward state of life? Is it not, as far as yourself and others can judge, the life of a disciple of Christ? Yes; Why then do you desire to live, or fear to die? If in the years you have already passed you have not wholly corrected your imperfections, what reason have you to suppose you should now be more successful? The tender mercy of God, his help and assistance, is all your hope if you live; with joy then cast yourself upon his mercy in death, as you would do in life. The business we are pursuing here, is not the

the purchasing a reward, but the fitting ourselves for it; our sincere endeavours will do the latter, but our greatest perfection through the longest life is wholly unequal to the former; of our fitness God only can be judge. If he cut us off in the midst of our sins; with awful terror and humble fear, but free from any rash judgment, men should consider the stroke; but if, having given us time for repentance, and a desire to make use of it, he now shorten our labour, and call us into his presence, let us go with joy. Add to all this, that we do not enough consider how hateful sin is; we look upon it only with regard to its consequences as to ourselves, but do not consider it as to its heinousness with regard to God. If we valued his honour as we do our own, or that of a person we highly esteem, we should be more careful through life than we now are, to prevent the sins of others, and our own; and when called upon by death, should consider as a favour, the being removed from those temptations
which

which continually betray us into faults, by which the name of God is dishonoured, and by which we daily add to the load of our offences, against so good and gracious a Benefactor.

The two last chapters of the Revelation give us a description of the New Heaven and New Earth, with the New Jerusalem descending from Heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband; the former earth with its sorrows is said to be no more; and he that sitteth on the throne saith, “ It is done, behold I make “ all things new.” By these words, I think, seems to be determined, what has however been sometimes a question, whether by the New Heaven be meant the final state of the blessed, or whether these things, as well as the former, are to be understood of the kingdom of Christ on earth.

To me it seems plain, that the former visions relate to the destruction of the enemies of Christ, and his glorious kingdom on earth, whatever may be meant thereby; and that the account given in these two last chapters,

is

is of a state as yet wholly unknown. If this be admitted, another dispute will, I suppose, be also decided, viz. whether the kingdom of Christ be eternal, or to conclude with the office which as man he received from God. That his office as Mediator, and his kingdom as Judge, must have an end, is very evident; for they must cease of course, when those for whom they were undertaken are in possession of the happiness purchased for them; the last enemy is destroyed, the heavens and earth are no more, but the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the same from whom the prophecy began, still exists, and declares, “ It “ is done, behold I make all things new;” and then the New Jerusalem descends from God, of which the temple and the light is He that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb, considered as one object of worship, one source of blessings for ever and ever!

The account of the New Jerusalem, or city of peace, is such as gives a general idea of beauty, riches, strength, and glory; but described

described by emblems, probably chosen on purpose to take off our eyes from looking on the things of this world; for the more unnatural they are, the more of necessity they turn our attention to the words of the Apostle, that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, “neither hath entered into the heart of man “to comprehend, the things which God hath “prepared for them that love him.” This is the “House not made with hands, eternal “in the Heavens,” of which St. Paul speaks in another place; here shall the redeemed be ever with Christ; and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, for sorrow and sighing shall be no more.—But here our enquiries must stop, for they would be to no purpose; and our whole attention must be fixed on the preparing our hearts, that we may truly say to each other, when the signs of our Saviour’s coming shall appear, let us lift up our heads with an humble but steady confidence, for “our redemption draweth nigh.”

* Luke xxi. 28.



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